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A just transition for Collie that leaves no one behind: A community-led social justice analysis of Collie's transition

Naomi Joy Godden
Edith Cowan University

Georgia Beardman
Edith Cowan University

Mehran Nejati
Edith Cowan University

Evonne Scott

Jaime Yallup Farrant

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Naomi Joy Godden, Georgia Beardman, Mehran Nejati, Evonne Scott, Jaime Yallup Farrant, Leonie Scoffern, Joseph Northover, James Khan, Lynette Winmar, Phillip Ugle, Kiera Mulholland, Jayla Parkin, Stevie Anderson, and Angus Morrison-Saunders

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A community-led social justice analysis of Collie's transition



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Designed by Climate Justice Union



FOREWORD

Kaya nyoonak koorliny (Hello, how are you going?)

We are the people of the Wilman tribe known as the freshwater people. The Mardalup (Collie River) means so much to us Wilman people. The river is our storyline, songline of our Traditional Owner past, present and future generations.

The Ngangungudditj Walgu, the hairy-faced snake, is the creator of all waterways within our Boodja (land) of the Wilman freshwater people. He rests at Minninup Pool after creating all waterways, above ground and below and he created the estuary in Australind.

He came back up the river to Koolinup (swimming in water) at Minninup. The six Noongar seasons have been interrupted due to climate change. It affects our hunting. The seasons tell us when to hunt, when to pick berries. The yellow flowers tell us when it's time to go hunting.

The collaboration between the Climate Justice Union and Edith Cowan University has enabled us to have a voice about Collie's transition.

Joe Northover and James Khan

Wilman Traditional Owners

6th August 2023



DEDICATION

In loving memory of Aunty Lynette Josephine Winmar (nee Ugle)

26th March 1954 - 15th August 2023

"Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day. Unseen, unheard but always near, forever loved, forever missed, forever cherished."

We are grateful for the knowledge and stories you shared with us.

Joe, Jum, Leonie, Jaime, Naomi, Georgia, Stevie, Jayla, Kiera

Authorship

This project has been co-led and implemented by Collie community members in partnership with the Climate Justice Union WA and Edith Cowan University's Centre for People, Place and Planet. Authors are people who contributed to the writing of this report. Contributors are people who contributed to data collection and analysis. Wilman Boodja is the Country (land) of the Wilman Noongar people. Wilman Boodja is listed as first author of this report to acknowledge that Country is alive, and is actively participating in every process, conversation, and decision related to this project.

Co-authors:

Wilman Boodja, Naomi Joy Godden, Georgia Beardman, Mehran Nejati, Evonne Scott, Jaime Yallup Farrant, Leonie Scoffern, Joseph Northover, James Khan, Lynette Winmar, Phillip Ugle, Kiera Mulholland, Jayla Parkin, Stevie Anderson, Angus Morrison-Saunders.

Contributors:

Deirdre Winmar, Greg Busson, Michelle Smith, Kai Payze, Madu Venkatesan, Justin Alford.

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This project was made possible through the financial support of The Koorabup Trust, Climate Justice Union, and Edith Cowan University's Centre for People, Place and Planet, and the goodwill and in-kind contributions of many community members, community organisations and community stakeholders. We extend our deep felt gratitude to all.

Executive Summary



Collie is a community of 8,812 people located on the Boodja (Country) of the Wilman (Freshwater) peoples of the Bibbulmun Nation (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2021; South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, n.d.).

In Wilman wongi (language), the location of the townsite is called Koolinup which means “swimming in water”.

For millennia, Beelagu (the river people) have swum in Mardalup, the Collie River.

Collie is located 200km southeast of Perth in Western Australia (WA).

For more than 125 years, Collie has been the epicentre of coal-fired energy production in Western Australia.

However, the WA Government has decided to retire all state-owned coal-fired power stations in Collie by 2029.

Change is coming to Collie. New jobs and opportunities for local workers and the wider community need to be found. The climate is also changing.

There will be hotter, drier summers with extreme fire risk. Yearly rainfall will be less.

It will occur at different times and be harder to predict. Floods in the Mardalup (Collie River) may cause damage to parts of the town. How will the people of Collie cope with these changes?

This project is a collaboration between Collie community members, Wilman Traditional Owners, the Climate Justice Union WA (CJU), and Edith Cowan University's Centre for People, Place and Planet (CPPP).

Together, we have undertaken a social justice analysis of Collie's just transition and the existing and future threats from climate change.

Our project supports Collie's Just Transition Plan of the WA government. But it goes further to ensure that the needs of Boodja (Country) and the whole Collie community are included.

We call this a just transition for Collie that leaves no one behind.

We held community workshops in Collie and surveyed local residents. Four half-day workshops between November 2021 and May 2022 were attended by 40 people.

We also received 148 responses to our online survey, carried out from July 2022 to February 2023.

Collie participants included Wilman Elders and Traditional Owners, parents of children with disability, young people, LGBTQIA+ people, business owners, workers in the coal and energy industries, union representatives, local government Councillors, and other interested community members.

Some people also participated in workshops to analyse the project data and write this report. We also held a meeting on Country with Wilman Elders, community members and the Prime Minister's Office Net Zero Economy Taskforce.

This report shares many community voices from Collie to help prepare for and achieve a transition that reduces inequity, cares for Boodja, and provides a positive future for the whole community for generations to come.

We share what Collie community members told us is important to them to cope with the economic and climate changes to come. We asked them to share their own experiences and stories of the transition process and of climate change. We also asked them to identify possible actions for the future of Collie that will be fair for all.

Community perceptions of Collie, its future, and Collie's Just Transition Plan.

Boodja (Country), Kep (Water) and Bilya (River) are very important to the Collie community. The Wilman people have lived here and protected Boodja since time immemorial.

Wilman cultural practices involving Mardalup (Collie River) have taken place for thousands of generations.

The Collie community is proud, resilient, willing and quick to help others in need. It has a "big heart". Community members are concerned that through the transition, people may leave Collie because of job shortages, reduced wages, and rising costs of living.

Less than half of people who completed the survey feel well-informed about Collie's Just Transition Plan and feel they can have their say about the Plan. Just over a third find the Plan to be 'just' (i.e. fair). Many community members feel excluded from planning Collie's transition.

They say the "just transition is not just about the workers, it's about community". They feel the transition is leaving some people behind, including Aboriginal peoples, workers, contractors, young people, people on low incomes, and people with disability.

Jobs, employment, businesses, industries, and education

Community members feel uncertain about the future of industry and business in Collie. They are concerned about loss of heavy industry and related core services, reduced retail spend, and local business closure.

Over 92% of community members who completed the survey are concerned about employment.

Key issues with the transition are job losses, changing jobs in a competitive labour market with fewer choices, reduced job security and stability with fewer local permanent jobs, and unemployment.

Community members are worried about the financial impacts of job losses or reduced wages, particularly with rising costs of living and low social security payments.

Many community members are worried Collie's high unemployment rates will increase.

Some barriers to employment include lack of suitable childcare, discrimination, and workplace inflexibility. In our survey, 80% of people said that access to quality training and education is important.

There is a need for appropriate education and training and new jobs and employment pathways so that young people, workers, and families can have a career locally and continue to live in Collie.

Community infrastructure, facilities, housing, and services

Over 80% of people who completed the survey are concerned about access to quality and affordable housing in Collie.

This is the same for access to quality health and social services.

Common housing concerns include unaffordable housing prices and difficulty finding affordable housing (especially for Aboriginal people and people experiencing poverty), insufficient social housing and long waitlists, and homelessness.

Community members experience difficulties accessing health and social services, including reliable, adequate, and affordable health and mental health care, aged care, disability support and therapy services, reliable, regular public transport, and fresh produce.

They are worried that population decline will see a loss of local services; particularly as service demand increases due to the impacts of climate changes.

Climate change and disasters

Scientists predict that the Collie region will experience extreme climate events in the future, such as heatwaves, droughts, floods, fires, and severe storms/cyclones.

In our survey, over 88% are concerned about climate change and the environment, more than 95% are concerned about bushfires and more than 91% are concerned about drought.

Community members fear that climate change, particularly reduced rainfall, will damage ecosystems, with loss of biodiversity and habitat, and reduce water quality and access. Wilman people have noticed changes in the six Noongar seasons due to climate change.

Community members are concerned about health risks of climate change, including respiratory illnesses, skin cancer, and poor mental health. There are fewer younger people involved in local volunteer emergency services.

Who are hardest hit?

Everyone in Collie is affected by the transition away from coal-based industries and climate change. But some groups are especially vulnerable. Community members identified the following people who are the hardest hit.

- Workers: difficulties finding alternative work in the local area.
- Families: may need to move away for work, or families may be disrupted by FIFO (fly-in, fly-out) work.
- Low-income households: they have the least resources to fall back on.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: new, culturally-responsive employment opportunities are needed. Climate change impacts have profound impacts on Boodja and Wilman wellbeing.
- Children and young people: people perceive a loss of local opportunities for young people in jobs, education and other prospects.
- Disabled people and older people: the Collie population is ageing. Access to health care and other social services, increased cost of living, and mobility constraints are key concerns.
- Women, non-binary peoples and LGBTQIA+ peoples: support services must be accessible for all genders and sexualities. Single parent households are mostly led by women, with fewer financial resources and limited childcare options.

Community members feel very strongly that Collie's transition must respond to the needs of community members who are hardest hit by economic and climate changes.

What is needed to achieve a just transition for Collie that leaves no one behind?

Community members identified seven key strategies to address the issues identified in this report.

Strategy 1: The just transition must centre Boodja (Country) and uphold the rights, responsibilities and voices of Wilman peoples.

Strategy 2: The just transition process must strengthen the Collie community.

Strategy 3: The just transition must engage and communicate with local and diverse voices and leaders.

It must foster inclusive participation in transition planning and decision-making.

Strategy 4: The just transition must enable alternative, clean industries that enhance Boodja (Country) and the community. It must provide meaningful and secure jobs with decent wages, conditions, and support workers in all their diversities.

Strategy 5: The transition process must provide quality, accessible and affordable education and training opportunities for community members of all ages and diversities.

Strategy 6: A just transition must provide adequate, affordable and culturally-safe infrastructure, resources and services for the basic needs, health and wellbeing of all community members.

Strategy 7: A just transition must reduce greenhouse gas emissions through investment in renewable energy and sustainable transport solutions.

It must support just adaptation, and enhance resilience to climate change and to disasters like fires, storms and floods for all members of the community.

Conclusion

Collie has a strong community spirit and a long history of people supporting each other. The findings in this report can support the process of planning and implementing Collie's transition to build on these community strengths.

Our next step is a series of Action Planning Workshops for Collie community members to develop actions for the just transition to be fair and inclusive. Together we can create a blueprint for the future that will ensure a just transition for Collie that leaves no-one behind.

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1. INTRODUCTION



Collie is a community of 8,812 people located on the Boodja (Country) of the Wilman (Freshwater) peoples of the Bibbulmun Nation (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2021; (South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, n.d.). In Wilman wongi (language), the location of the townsite is called Koolinup which means “swimming in water”.

For millennia, Beelagu (the river people) have swum in Mardalup, the Collie River. Collie is located 200km southeast of Perth in Western Australia (WA).

For more than 125 years, Collie has been the epicentre of coal-fired energy production in Western Australia. However, the WA Government has decided to retire all state-owned coal-fired power stations in Collie by 2029.

In 2020, the WA Government developed Collie's Just Transition Plan with a Just Transition Working Group to fund and implement a just transition for affected workers and the wider community away from its economic dependence on coal. To date, the WA Government has committed over \$660 million to Collie's transition.

At the same time, Collie is at risk of impacts of climate change, with decreased rainfall, increased fire, and flooding. The phase-out of coal-fired power generation in Collie, along with the impacts of climate change, will have major ramifications for the people of the town and region.

1.1 About this project

This project, 'A Just Transition for Collie that leaves no one behind', was developed in response to Collie's transition and climate context. It builds on many years of previous work undertaken in the community by members of the Collie community including the Beyond Zero Emissions report released in 2019, 'Collie at the crossroads: Planning a future beyond coal.'

The Beyond Zero Emissions (2019) report identified industry opportunities for the Collie community as it moves away from coal extraction and energy generation, such as land regeneration, social care, renewable manufacturing, and low emission industries.

Following the release of Collie's Just Transition Plan in 2020, Collie community partners and CJU identified the need to embed climate justice in Collie's transition, with a whole-of-community social justice approach that leaves no one behind and addresses the environmental and social impacts of climate change.

This project is a collaboration between Collie community members, the Climate Justice Union WA (CJU), and Edith Cowan University's Centre for People, Place and Planet (CPPP) to undertake a social justice analysis of Collie's just transition and the existing and future threats from climate change.

The project builds on decades of community-based work that has come before it, to produce a local baseline social justice profile which highlights how diverse community members are likely to be impacted by the energy transition, and by the increasing and expected local impacts of climate change.

The project design and implementation are strongly informed by Wilman knowledge holders, through relationship-building with Wilman Elders and community members, and inclusion of their priorities and needs in transition planning and responding to economic disruption and localised climate impacts.

Collie community members co-led every step of the project, including collecting and analysing data, contributing to reports, and taking action to address issues of injustice.



The project aims to support the Collie community to achieve the type of transition they need and deserve; one which reduces inequity and provides a positive future for the whole community for generations to come.

The project involved a range of activities for community members to share their experiences and stories of transition and climate change and identify possible actions. It is grounded in many years of community relationship-building with yarns with key stakeholders, including Wilman Elders and other Aboriginal community members, Collie residents, government officials, unions, and workers in local social and community services.

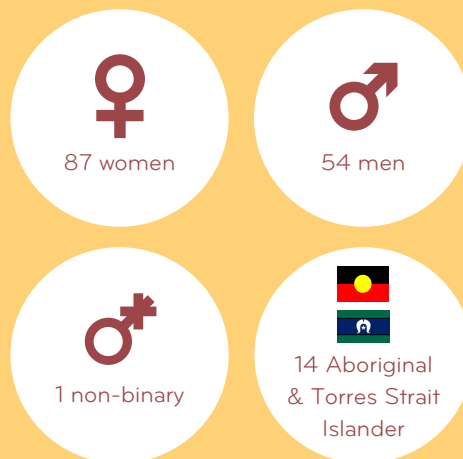
We held four half-day social mapping workshops between November 2021 and May 2022, with 40 participants including Wilman Elders and Traditional Owners, parents of children with disability, young people, LGBTQIA+ people, business owners, workers in the coal and energy industries, union representatives, local government Councillors, other interested community members, and representatives of CJU and CPPP.

In the workshops, community members identified the social justice impacts of the economic transition underway in Collie and climate change impacts in the region, and opportunities for action to address these issues.

We conducted an online survey in July 2022 through February 2023 to capture community members' perceptions of the transition process, the impacts of climate change, and opportunities for action in Collie.

CJU Survey Participants

148 people participated in the survey, including 87 women (58.8%), 54 men (36.5%), 1 non-binary person (0.7%), and six people who did not disclose their gender (4%). 14 people (9.9%) identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Survey participants were aged between 15 and 80 (average age of 47.4 years).



62.1% of the survey participants were working part-time or full-time, from diverse industries including mining (17.1%), Health Care and Social Assistance (15.2%), Retail Trade (12.4%), Other Services (12.4%), Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (8.6%), and Education and Training (7.6%). Other people who did the survey were unemployed (5.6%), studying (0.6%), retired (18.1%), caring for children (11.3%), or providing unpaid assistance to persons with a disability (2.5%).

On 21 April 2023, three representatives of the Prime Minister's Office Net Zero Economy Taskforce attended a meeting On Country at Minninup with seven Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members. The meeting involved Elder-led discussions about community experiences of Collie's transition and processes of transition planning.



We also held workshops throughout the project for a diverse range of project participants to analyse the data (17 people) and co-author this report (14 people). Childcare, refreshments, and honoraria were provided to support community members to participate in project activities.

After this report is launched, action planning workshops will be held with community members and stakeholders.

These workshops will assist community members to identify possible actions they could take to support Collie's Just Transition process to be fair and inclusive and of benefit for all members of the Collie community and Boodja (Country).

1.2 About this report

This community report has two aims.

Firstly, it shares the community-led social justice analysis of the transition from coal and climate impacts in Collie.

Secondly, the report draws on community perspectives to suggest strategies for how Collie's transition can be just and leave no-one behind.

Collie community members and stakeholders can use the evidence in this report to identify and develop priority actions that uphold the needs and rights of Country and people in all their diversities, reduce local vulnerabilities in ongoing transition planning and implementation, and ensure that the just transition, and climate responses, leave no one behind.

Another report will be produced after the community action planning workshops, which will also include reflections on the project process.

This report is structured as follows:

Background

This section shares information about the Collie context, including Wilman Boodja, Collie community demographics, an overview of the economic and climate changes in Collie, and transformative approaches to just transition policy making.

Community perceptions of Collie, the future, and the transition

This section shares community perspectives about Collie, including Boodja (Country), Kep (Water) and Bilya (River) and community identities, community concerns for the future, and community perceptions of Collie's Just Transition Plan.

Jobs, employment, businesses, industries and education

This section shares community concerns about how the transition and climate change affect local businesses and industry.

It explores local jobs, including wages and cost of living, unemployment and childcare.

It shares community perspectives on education, training, and employment pathways, discussing education access and inclusion, and pathways for young people.

Community infrastructure, facilities, housing and services

This section shares community perspectives on how the economic transition and climate change impact provision of local infrastructure, facilities, and services in Collie. It focuses on housing, health and social services, transport and sport and recreation.

Climate change and disasters

This section shares community views on climate change, especially bushfire, floods, storms and cyclones, and the environmental impacts of climate change on Wilman Boodja, and existing resources to address these challenges.

Who are hardest hit?

This section shares community perspectives on which groups of people in Collie are hardest hit by the transition and climate change.

What is needed for a just transition for Collie that leaves no one behind?

This final section shares seven strategies, based on community suggestions, for what is needed to support a just transition for Collie that leaves no one behind.

Conclusion

The report finishes with a summary of the key findings.

2. BACKGROUND



This section shares information about the Collie context, including Wilman Boodja, Collie community demographics, an overview of the economic and climate changes in Collie, and transformative approaches to just transition policy making.

2.1 Collie context

Wilman Traditional Custodians Joe Northover and James Khan explain that the Wilman people have preserved and protected their Boodja (Country) and moort (family) since time immemorial, sustaining cultural practices for thousands of generations with ongoing connection to and responsibility for the lands and waters of the Collie region (Northover, n.d. & Khan, n.d.).

The Collie local government area is located 57 kilometres inland from the southwest city of Bunbury and comprises 171,000 hectares. It is surrounded by state and national forest, with several important Cultural and spiritual freshwater sites including the Collie River, Minninup Pool, Collie Spring, and the Brunswick and Preston Rivers.

The Wilman people identify the Ngarngungudditj Waugal (hairy faced snake) as the creation spirit of the Collie River (Michell & Halsmith, 2019):

The Ngarngungudditj Waugal came from the north of Collie, passed through the Collie area and moved towards Eaton, forming all local waterways, including the Collie, Preston and Brunswick Rivers. When the snake reached Eaton, it turned its body creating the Leschenault Estuary and then travelled back up the river to rest at Minninup Pool, known also as Koolingup, or swimming place (Beckwith Environmental Planning, 2009).

The Collie region was colonised in the 1880s after settlers found coal in the Collie basin, and the town soon became the energy-generating epicentre of Western Australia (Government of Western Australia, 2020).

Since that time, Collie has experienced the closure of the amalgamated collieries, the closure of all underground coal mines and the retirement of two regionally significant power stations – known as Muja A and B (Beyond Zero Emissions, 2019). Currently, Collie has two coal mines, Premier and Griffin, and three power stations, Bluewaters, Collie and Muja.

Data from the ABS (2021, 2022) show that there are 8,812 people living in Collie, and 44% of the community are over the age of 50. 4.2% of the population are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (374 people), 19.1% were born overseas, and 6.6% of the population needs assistance to undertake core activities.

Compared with WA as a whole, Collie has lower than average rates of workforce participation (51.2% compared with 63.9% in WA), lower attainment of Bachelor Degree level of education (5.8% compared with 23.8% in WA), and higher rates of unemployment (7.9% compared with 5.1% in WA).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Collie experience almost triple the average local rate of unemployment, at 21.9%.

The median weekly household income in Collie is \$1,234 compared with \$1,815 in WA, and 25.6% of the Collie households earn less than \$650 per week (compared with 16.3% of the WA population).

More than 4,400 people in Collie receive Government financial assistance, including 778 persons receiving JobSeeker (unemployment benefits), 1,323 people receiving the Age pension, 403 people receiving the Disability support pension, and 145 people receiving the Parenting payment (single).

In Collie, the most common jobs are Technicians and Trade Workers (23.1%), Machinery Operators and Drivers (16.4%), Labourers (15.5%) and Community and Personal Service Workers (11.6%).

The main industries of employment are Coal Mining (11.8%), followed by Primary Education (4.2%), Alumina Production (4.1%) and Supermarket and Grocery Stores (3.7%).



2.2 Economic and climatic changes in Collie

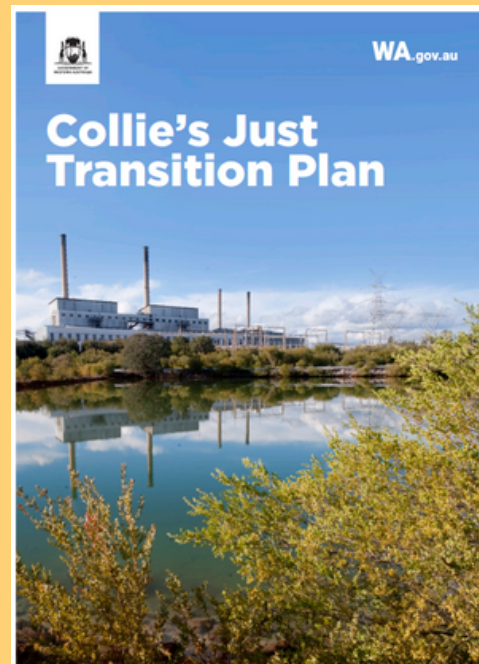
Energy Transition

In August 2019, the WA Government announced that it would retire two of four coal-fired operating units at the state-owned Muja Power Station in Collie in October 2022 (Government of Western Australia, 2020).

Then in June 2022, the WA Government announced that it would begin the process of phasing out the remaining state-owned coal-fired power stations in Collie by 2029.

In December 2020, the WA Government released 'Collie's Just Transition Plan' to fund and implement a just transition for Collie's coal workers and wider community away from its economic dependence on coal (Government of Western Australia, 2020).

This process is led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Collie Just Transition Working Group, together with industry, unions, business groups and the Shire of Collie, with a strong focus on opportunities for affected workers.



The Plan strongly focuses on diversifying the Collie economy, maximising opportunities for affected workers, and celebrating Collie's industrial history and future.

It is estimated that more than 1,200 workers in the coal industry are affected by Collie's energy transition (Mercer et al. 2022).

In the context of Collie as a small, interconnected community with a localised economy, the impacts of the transition are felt beyond affected workers, such as to 533 young people in secondary education; 250 people in tertiary education; 293 people who are unemployed; and 364 local businesses (ABS, 2022).

To date, the WA Government has committed \$662 million to the implementation of this Plan. An initial investment of \$115M was made in 2020, including to establish the Collie Small Grants Program and the Collie Future Industry Development Fund, and to fund tourism initiatives.

In 2022, the Government invested a further \$547.4M through the Collie Transition Package, including \$200M for the Collie Industrial Transition Fund to support new and emerging large-scale industrial projects, \$300M to decommission State-owned coal-fired power stations when they are retired, and an additional \$12M for the Collie Jobs and Skills Centre, \$2M for the Collie Small Grants Program, and \$4.4M for the Collie Delivery Unit to coordinate, oversee and promote transition activities.

Climate change

With over 65,000 years of relationship with Boodja, Wilman Noongar people have observed many changes to the climate and environment in the Collie region due to colonisation and industrialisation.

Wilman Traditional Owners observe changes in the patterns of the six Noongar seasons:

“

The biggest thing we see is the change in the six seasons. I'm talking 20, 25 years, 30 years ago and we used to see the flowers out now. (Workshop 1)

”

Some observed changes include altered migration patterns for native animals, reduced and unpredictable rainfall, and different flowering patterns for plants.

Wilman knowledges are reinforced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a United Nations body that assesses the science about climate change.

The IPCC's 2022 report links the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change with broader global and social trends, recognising that the climate, biodiversity and human systems are all interdependent.

The IPCC predicts that the southwest region of WA, where Collie is located, will experience a temperature increase of 0.5 to 1.2 degrees by 2030 and will be severely impacted by the changing climate (Lawrence et al., 2022).



2.3 Transformative approaches to just transition policymaking

In Collie's Just Transition Plan (Government of Western Australia, 2020), then Premier Mark McGowan describes a just transition as "an internationally endorsed framework that that recognises energy transitions are about people: the ones who make the decisions and the ones affected by those decisions" (p.6).

He goes on to state that a just transition for Collie “is not a fixed set of rules, but a vision and a process based on dialogue and an agenda shared by workers, industry, and governments that needs to be negotiated and implemented, taking into consideration each community's own unique contexts” (p.6).

The United Nations International Labour Organisation (2015) explains that a just transition must “contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty” (p.4).

As such, a just transition must extend the dialogue and shared agenda beyond workers, industry and governments to include the needs and aspirations of the whole community to directly address existing social inequalities. This is reinforced by the OECD:

“ [Just transition] is a bridge from where we are today to a future where all jobs are green and decent, poverty is eradicated, and communities are thriving and resilient. More precisely, it is a systemic and whole of economy approach to sustainability.

It includes both measures to reduce the impact of job losses and industry phaseout on workers and communities, and measures to produce new, green and decent jobs, sectors and healthy communities. It aims to address environmental, social and economic issues together. (Smith, 2017, p.3)

International evidence and conceptualisations of just transition have increased and evolved significantly in recent years, including through the Paris Agreement as a means for tackling climate change.

Analysis of available international research suggests there are three main approaches to just transition policy making (Jafry et al., 2022; Krawchenko & Gordon, 2021; Mertins-Kirkwood, 2018; Pai et al., 2020). These are reactive policy making, proactive policy making, and transformative policy making.

Reactive policy making

Reactive policy making for a just transition has a narrow focus on directly impacted workers, and aims to influence economic markers like employment rates with initiatives such as income support, retraining, and workforce transition plans for affected workers.

Proactive policy making

Proactive policy making for a just transition takes a slightly broader focus beyond individual workers to maximise the long-term benefits of the transition to a carbon neutral economy. It may involve targeted skills training and spending to support the economic viability of vulnerable communities.

Transformative policy making

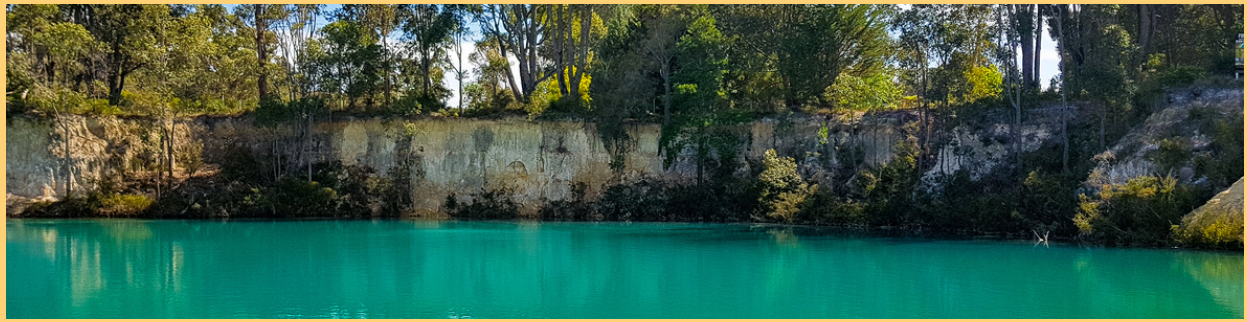
Transformative policy making for a just transition addresses the failures of both reactive and proactive policy making to redress wider social inequities. It emphasises economic and social transformation to balance social justice and environmental needs.

Transformative policy making aligns with the goal of this project and international best practice to support Collie community members to advocate for just transition policy outcomes that address existing social inequities. Transformative policy making for a just transition has the following features:

- Long-term, proactive and multi-level planning that is sufficiently funded at all levels and allows time for place-based, meaningful engagement that fosters community participation (Campbell & Coenen, 2017; Furnaro et al., 2021; Jafry et al., 2022).
- Community-based, participatory engagement that seeks the input and voices of a representative cross-section of all members of an affected community. Policies that are co-designed with community members increase a sense of ownership amongst communities and strengthen participation (Blomkamp, 2018; Kronsell, 2013; Sartor, 2018; Wooltorton et al., 2020).
- Localised Indigenous knowledge and voices are sought throughout, and inform transition policy at every stage of the process, from planning to development to implementation (Cha et al., 2021; Goldtooth, 2020; Weeramanthri et al., 2020). In addition, a transformative policy process acknowledges how colonisation contributes to climate change and how this impacts local Indigenous communities (Abimbola et al., 2021; McGregor et al., 2020; Sealey-Huggins, 2018).
- Informed and underpinned by recognitional, procedural and distributional justice to ensure that structural inequalities are addressed and redressed (Braunger, 2022; Evans & Phelan, 2016; Goddard & Farrelly, 2018; McCauley & Heffron, 2018; McCauley et al., 2019).
- Informed by the latest climate science. Climate data should be specific to local geographical contexts and included in a way that links the climate change vulnerabilities of a region to decarbonisation (Krawchenko & Gordon, 2021; Snyder, 2018).
- Enables strong local governance and funding. Recent research out of Germany shows that when financial autonomy is granted to local governments, communities are empowered and resourced to implement local transition processes that meet their specific needs (Furnaro et al., 2021).
- Clear messaging, derived from a locally co-designed, community-based process that fosters positive public perception of, and local trust in, the energy transition (Cherry, 2022).
- Spatially targeted policy approaches that focus on localised places derived from specific local needs, as identified through community-led, place-based engagement (Blomkamp, 2018; Sartor, 2018). This enables targeted investment to support community uplift, as well as fostering social and economic resilience through the process of transition (Campbell & Coenen, 2017; Cherry, 2022; Evans & Phelan, 2016; Jafry et al., 2022; Kais & Islam, 2016).

This international literature provides helpful guidance for how Collie's transition can address social inequities and leave no one behind.

3. COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF COLLIE, ITS FUTURE AND THE TRANSITION



This section shares community perspectives about Collie, including Boodja (Country), Kep (Water) and Bilya (River), and community identities, community concerns for the future, and community perceptions of Collie's Just Transition Plan.

3.1 Boodja, Kep, and Bilya

Boodja (Country), Kep (Water) and Bilya (River) are very important to the Collie community. In this project's survey, 47% of community members were moderately or extremely concerned about the environment (43% of women and 53% of men), and only 10% were not at all concerned.

Similarly, 45% were either moderately or extremely concerned about water (39.2% of women and 53.2% of men), and only 15% were not at all concerned.

Wilman Elders explain the spiritual and cultural significance of Minninup (on the Collie River), that "if we haven't got the water we haven't got a survival kit" (Workshop 3). They say,

“

The river, Mardalup, means a lot to us because our ancestors they lived all along the river. So of course, it's important to us, it's recreational, its food source, spiritual, very spiritual, wellness, wellbeing.

When we have a loss in our family, we go down the river for calmness and we talk to the river, we talk to the river for our loss. That's where we go for our mourning, you know, mourn for peace. (Workshop 3)

”

For Wilman people, the river system is a core pillar of Collie life, used for bathing "when the elderly generation, they had babies," (Workshop 3) and for camping on its banks.

Other community members describe the Collie River (including Harris River Dam, Wellington Dam, Minninup Pool and Lake Kepwari) as "the lifeblood of Collie" (Workshop 2).



As community members said,

“

Everything's focused around the river and activities around the river and the beauty and the nature. (Workshop 2)

What is a lovely Collie? A healthy river. (Workshop 3)

”

Community members, including coal workers, acknowledge that Collie's coal industry has significant impacts on Boodja (Country), Kep (the water table) and Bilya (river systems), along with air quality and the planet more broadly:

“

I made my livelihood out of burning coal... I'm part of the problem. From halfway through my career in the power industry I was already on board about the need to actually wind back our reliance upon fossil fuels. (Workshop 2)

The end of coal will mean an improvement in local air and water quality. (Survey 126, male, aged 54, unemployed)

”

Community members maintain that Boodja, Kep, and Bilya must be central considerations in Collie's transition.

3.2 Community identities, knowledges, and changes

Collie has a strong community. In all workshops, community members said that Collie community members are proud, resilient, and quick to help someone in need. Collie has a "big heart" (Workshop 4) and willingness to gather, organise and help:

“

I've noticed that there's always a person in the community who's willing to help, whether they're starting a GoFundMe page, doing the food drops that's been happening, the community itself here is a great resource. It's like one big family. (Workshop 4)

”

However, Wilman Traditional Owners highlight the absence of robust, culturally appropriate, culturally safe engagement between the local government and the Wilman community, and lack of honouring of Wilman peoples' deep wisdom and knowledges about Country, culture, society, and economy. Wilman Traditional Custodians share their desire for representation at local government level:

“

There's no recognition of, or consulting with the Aboriginal people at all. (Workshop 3)

We need to have a voice. (Workshop 3)

”

Traditional Owners feel that Wilman representation and voice in local government can improve outcomes for Wilman people and Country, along with relationships and local knowledge of Boodja for Wadjella (non-Indigenous) people.



There is no Aboriginal cultural centre in Collie, and Wilman community members are worried about barriers to cultural learning:

“

When there's no opportunities for each culture, or options to turn to, there's drugs and alcohol, and that's the biggest thing in every town. (Workshop 3).

”

Some community members discuss how mining influences Collie's culture, identity, and sense of pride, and Collie's important role in WA's industrialisation:

“

I put it down to the mining history because in the mines you're literally dependent for your life on the people you are working alongside and although the women weren't underground, they would be together if there was something happening in the mine. (Workshop 2)

”

Community members also observe negative external perceptions of Collie as a “filthy, dirty place” (Workshop 2), but feel the community can play an important role in combating climate change:

“

People stereotype coal mine towns a lot, without actually realising that some people who work in the coal industry are actually people who quite often are the most attuned to what the risks are of climate [change] because they live - like this is a town surrounded by forest. (Workshop 1)

”

Many community members believe Collie's transition is causing changes in population and demographics.

They are concerned about population decline, with people “moving out of town because there's nothing here for them, there's nothing going on” (Workshop 3) due to work shortages, reduced wages, and rising cost of living. Population loss affects the whole community:

“

Schools may have reduced resources because of less students, some may be forced to [amalgamate] or close down. Sporting groups and recreational facilities will lose members and may close their doors.

We already have an incline in aged people and may need more facilities to cater for them. Hospital may be downgraded (loss of mines and other related companies). (Survey 6, female, aged 71, retired)

”

Community members observe that more residents are taking up Fly-in Fly-out (FIFO) and Drive-in Drive-out work. There are also more “treechangers and retirees” (Survey 53, female, aged 64, retired) moving to Collie, bringing new perspectives, diversity, and cultural change. However, these changes affect community relations and familiarity:

“

In the past, you'd walk down town and you'd know just about everyone you walk past. These days you don't. (Workshop 2)

You only have to go into the Shire, and they're all new faces, and you don't even know anybody. And they know nothing about Collie. (Workshop 3)

”

Collie's transition is an important process for maintaining and strengthening Collie's community spirit and multiple identities.

3.3 Community concerns for the future

Less than half (44.7%) of 148 community members who participated in the survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I think that I am well informed about the Just Transition Plan". Men were much more likely to agree or strongly agree (56.3%) than women (37.3%).

The top six areas that people are mostly concerned with regarding Collie's future include the following:

Fire:

95.3% of respondents have some concerns about fire (57% of women and 66% of men are moderately or extremely concerned).



Environment:

89.4% of respondents have some concerns about the environment (43% of women and 53% of men are moderately or extremely concerned).



Employment:

92.9% of respondents have some concerns about employment (69% of women and 63% of men are moderately or extremely concerned).



Climate change:

88.2% of respondents have some concerns about climate change (43% of women and 56% of men are moderately or extremely concerned).



Drought:

91.8% of respondents have some concerns about drought (35% of women and 50% of men are moderately or extremely concerned).



Access to quality social services:

85.9% of respondents have some concerns about access to quality social services (43% of women and 66% of men are moderately or extremely concerned).



These survey findings highlight the importance of Collie's transition integrating the diverse social and economic needs of community members and responding to the changing climate.

3.4 Community perceptions of 'Collie's Just Transition Plan'

Less than half (44.7%) of community members who participated in the survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I think that I am well informed about the Just Transition Plan". Men were much more likely to agree or strongly agree (56.3%) than women (37.3%).

“

I don't really know much about it. (Survey 135, male, aged 20, working full-time)

Information isn't filtering down to townspeople. (Survey 76, female, aged 54, unemployed)

”

Less than half (44.7%) of community members who participated in the survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel like I can have my say about the Just Transition Plan" (45% of women, 44% of men).

Many community members, particularly those who already experience disadvantage, feel they have not been adequately consulted or engaged in planning Collie's just transition.



Wilman people who participated in this project feel they have been excluded from transition planning discussions and decision-making:

“

There's no recognition of consulting with the Aboriginal people at all. (Workshop 3)

”

A Traditional Owner said that this project's research workshop was "the first time ever it involved the Noongar aspect, being asked and involvement in the future of the town" (Workshop 1).

Other community members express a desire to be heard, but feel their perspective would not be valued:

“

My say generally makes no difference. Business call the shots. (Survey 96, male, aged 55, working part-time)

”

Some community members provided suggestions to improve information sharing about the transition, including the "need to involve local community members and representatives from a variety of cultures" (Survey 130, female, aged 53, working part-time).

Only 35.3% of community members who participated in the survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I am finding the Just Transition Plan to be just (i.e., fair)". Men were much more likely to agree or strongly agree (43.7%) than women (29.4%).

Community members feel strongly that "just transition is not just about the workers, it's about community" (Workshop 1). However, several community members feel that Collie's Just Transition Plan is only about workers in affected industries.

Many people are concerned that the transition in Collie is leaving some people behind, including Aboriginal peoples, workers, contractors, young people, people on low incomes, and people with disability.



They urge the Plan and its implementation to address the needs of the whole community:

“

Don't forget about us. Don't leave us behind for the sake of a few votes. (Survey 13, male, aged 37, working full-time)

The scope of the Collie Delivery Unit needs to be widened to actually be an all of Government response. Access to health services, support services and community capacity building is required. This is not just an economic issue but a slowly moving disaster that is currently being managed in a vacuum and without the local government or community being involved. (Survey 54, male, aged 56, working full-time)

Don't rely on tourism. It is not inclusive for lower socio-economic community members. (Survey 118, female, aged 53, working part-time)

”

Similarly, a community member expresses concern that while the just transition funding “looks big on paper”, it appears to favour business. They feel that there are structural barriers for community groups and non-profit organisations to access grants to enable community-led jobs creation. A key barrier is the requirement for matched funding.

They suggest that there should not be a requirement for matched funding for Wilman applicants for grant funding, in the spirit of reparations: “The Government should be matching us with what we've lost out on” (Writing workshop).

Some community members feel positively about the Plan's process and implementation - that government bodies are engaging with affected workers; that new industries are being planned; that some funding is provided to the community and tourism is being boosted; and that the transition experience in Collie is better than elsewhere in Australia:

“

I think the Just Transition process is being done as well as they can. It is a learning curve, and those involved are trying hard to make it work. I admire the way Synergy, for instance, is doing one-on-one, face to face consultation. They are trying to empower their workers, to give them some control over their lives and their future, when it has apparently been snatched away from them. (Survey 36, female, aged 80, volunteer)

”

“

Great work is going on to attract new industries, but it's not yet as successful as it needs to be. We need a BIG tourism drawcard. The Collie Futures grants are fantastic and lots of small businesses are getting them and doing good with the money. In the big coal industry workplaces, what is being said to be happening, and what is actually happening at ground level, are two totally different things. (Survey 93, gender not specified, aged 50, working full-time)

These changes are well overdue but very welcome from me. I see nothing but a positive clean future for the south west and Collie in particular. (Survey 126, male, aged 54, unemployed)

”

However, some other community members feel the implementation of the just transition is not yet delivering results or that it is too fast. They express that proposed projects haven't yet come to fruition, there is "lots of talk and promises" (Survey 44, male, aged 37, working full-time), and "a lot of fluff talked about and not much happening in town" (Survey 122, female, aged 51, working part-time).

The diverse perspectives of Collie's just transition highlight the importance of ongoing communication and engagement between decision-makers and community, and ensuring equitable and inclusive participation in transition decision-making.

4. JOBS, EMPLOYMENT, BUSINESSES, INDUSTRIES AND EDUCATION



This section shares community concerns about how the transition and climate change affect local businesses and industry. It explores local jobs, including wages and cost of living, unemployment and childcare. It shares community perspectives on education, training, and employment pathways, discussing education access and inclusion, and pathways for young people.

4.1 Industry and business

Community members who participated in the workshops and survey express uncertainty about the future of business and industry in Collie.

Some community members are concerned that reductions in coal mining and coal-fired energy production in Collie results in loss of heavy industry and related core services, with negative impacts across other local businesses.

They identify other impacts such as reduced spend in boutique shops and retail and closure of local businesses. With recent retail closures, Collie residents now “have to go out of town to buy those goods or access the services that aren’t here, so you spend your money out of town” (Workshop 1).

Community members also understand that taking action to address climate change affects local industries and businesses.

However, some people feel that industry changes may be beneficial if new businesses are developed. For example, the local newspaper was resurrected after it was scrapped during Covid lockdowns and is now owned by Collie residents with five paid employees.

Tourism has been a strong focus of recent WA Government investment in the Collie region. In some workshops, community members praised recent improvements to local tourism offerings, such as mountain bike trails, waterways and lakes, a mural trail and picturesque bush walks.

However, community members in Workshop 2 noted that some businesses in Collie are not sufficiently catering for visitors, with restricted opening hours and limited retail offerings.

They looked to other South West towns of Donnybrook and Margaret River for examples of what Collie's future beyond coal could be modelled off, such as breweries and speciality stores.

Some community members are concerned that the impacts of climate change will negatively affect industries that rely on the natural environment:

“We are known for our beautiful and unique ecosystems. If these become compromised it would be devastating. (Survey 10, female, aged 34, working part-time and caring for children)

No bush left, river level will get very low and nobody will come to swim here from out of town. (Survey 111, male, aged 20, caring for children, Aboriginal)

A community member also says, “The ending of logging in all growth forests is an excellent step forward for the bio security of the region and the impacts of tourism” (Survey 126, male, aged 54, unemployed).

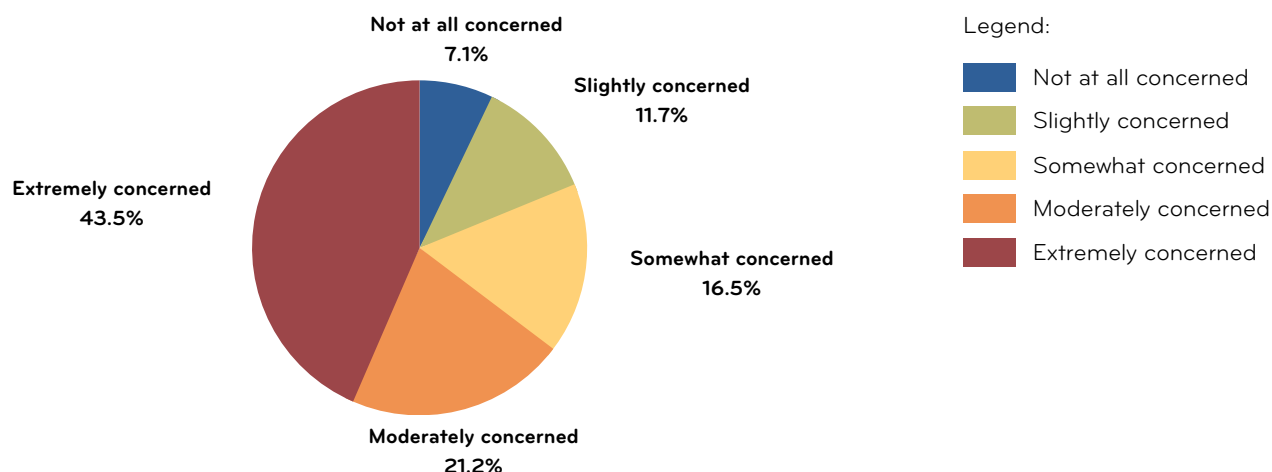
Community members emphasise the importance of transitioning to diverse and climate-responsive industries in Collie.



4.2 Jobs and Employment

In the survey, only 7.1% of participating community members say they are not at all concerned about employment in Collie, while 43.5% are extremely concerned (60% of women, 37.6% of men).

Figure 1: Level of community concern about employment



Most community members who participated in the workshops and survey expressed significant concern about jobs and employment due to the energy transition, with impacts in Collie and across the region:

“It's not Collie we're talking about; we're talking about this whole area, thousands of jobs. (Workshop 3)

Key identified issues are job losses, especially “skilled/relatively high paying blue collar jobs in mining” (Survey 2, male, aged 31, working full-time), changing jobs in a competitive labour market with fewer choices, reduced job security and stability with fewer local permanent jobs, and unemployment, including for highly skilled people and people who aren't ready for retirement.

Community members are worried about the financial impacts of job losses or reduced income:

“No job = no money = no house. (Survey 107, male, aged 27, working full-time, Aboriginal)

No jobs = no money = no food. (Survey 111, male, aged 20, caring for children, Aboriginal)

Many people employed in the coal industry will need to find new jobs and career paths, but “a lot have no other qualifications outside mining” (Survey 7, female, aged 52, carer).

Affected workers may experience stress due to costs associated with training, transitioning to new industries/sectors, and relocation.

Some community members discuss the need to “employ more locals first” (Workshop 4), as many local jobs are being filled by people who live outside Collie, to the detriment of the local community.

When local jobs are held by people who live outside the community, there is less money in the local economy, affecting local businesses such as retail and hospitality.

Wilman community members are also concerned about limited job opportunities for Aboriginal workers in local industries: “Ask them why haven’t you got Aboriginal workers out there, young ones?” (Workshop 3).

They say that the local government used to employ “nine or ten Noongars” but now there aren’t any Noongar staff (Workshop 3). They stress that jobs for local people, including Wilman people, are foundational for a thriving community.

Some people believe that Collie’s transition will produce new jobs and opportunities, and some also believe that for workers with decades of employment in the local industry, the financial impact of job losses may not be too great, as high wages and compulsory superannuation may result in a comfortable retirement – although this is not the universal experience.

Community members highlight the importance of sustainable local jobs that are accessible for people in all their diversities.

Wages and cost of living

Many community members express concerns about the impacts of Collie’s economic transition on wages, as replacement jobs for affected workers may not pay the same level of current wages:

“

Jobs in mining have high pay packets and now with the possibility of my partner most likely not be able to earn the same amount he has in shut downs we may lose our house. (Survey 12, female, aged 30, working full-time and caring for children)

”

In Workshop 2, community members explained that there has always been wage inequality in Collie between those who receive a mining/power station wage and those who do not:

“

...if you’re either at the mines, Worsley or the power stations, you’re probably still on good money. Six figure incomes, pretty good money. Outside of that, if you’re retail, it’s probably the same as anywhere. But as long as one person was in one of the industries, you’re going pretty good.

You can tell if they’re a nicer car and a caravan and a boat. Overseas holidays every year.

Yeah, and it definitely is a haves and have nots. (Workshop 3)

”

Several community members feel that higher mining wages are important for Collie's economic health, and when mine workers take a pay cut, it affects other workers in the town with less money circulating to local businesses.

Many community members are concerned about the rising cost of living in Collie, especially for bigger families.

People recognise that the cost of living will increase as climate change intensifies, affecting the whole community but particularly families and young people.

Community members in Workshop 4 criticised government decisions to invest heavily in tourism in Collie, instead of addressing social issues such as cost of living, aged and disability support, and housing affordability.

Community members are clear that the transition must enable jobs with fair and equitable wages and conditions that respond to local cost of living.

Unemployment

Many community members are worried that industry changes and job losses will increase Collie's already high rates of unemployment.

Some people share their lived experiences of unemployment and job-seeking in Collie.

A parent with autism has had difficulties finding work that is free from discrimination and flexible enough to meet their needs. These frustrations are amplified when trying to navigate federal unemployment services and Centrelink with few appropriate, full-time jobs available:

“

When I do my job searches... I look at Bunbury... I don't look here because I know there's nothing that I would get, like, accepted for, because the only jobs here are in, like, the restaurants ... or trainees in the mnes, that want 18 year olds. (Workshop 4)

”

Community members identify the need for local, accessible services to support people who are unemployed to find meaningful work in Collie.

Furthermore, there are other structural barriers to employment in Collie, including lack of affordable housing and lack of childcare.

Community members also highlight that federal social security payments, such as Jobseeker, are much too low and do not meet the cost of living in Collie.

This causes immense stress and difficulties for people experiencing unemployment.



Childcare

Childcare is often necessary for parents, especially women, to work. However, in Collie, community members say that there is a lack of appropriate childcare options, including for children with disabilities; lack of after school care options; long waitlists for childcare places; childcare centres are "closing down" (Workshop 3); and grandparents are caring for children.

Several community members are unable to work due to a childcare shortage:

“

There's not enough childcare. If I wanted to go back to work now or even just do a couple days here and there, I couldn't. (Workshop 2)

There's definitely a need for more and better assistance with family needs. (Workshop 2)

”

Access to childcare is seen as vital in Collie's transition.

4.3 Education, training, and employment pathways

Many community members are concerned about the future of work in Collie, particularly employment for young people. Some people believe they may be forced to leave Collie for work:

“

I have reduced confidence in stable work close to home where we have invested in a home to be able to continue meeting our lifestyle. The town and work options in the area needs innovative solutions to evolve and transition. (Survey 40, male, aged 34, working full-time)

”

There is a need for innovative alternative employment pathways and solutions so that young people, workers, and families can continue to live in Collie.

However, some community members identify challenges in current education and training options in Collie, across primary, secondary, post-secondary and vocational education.

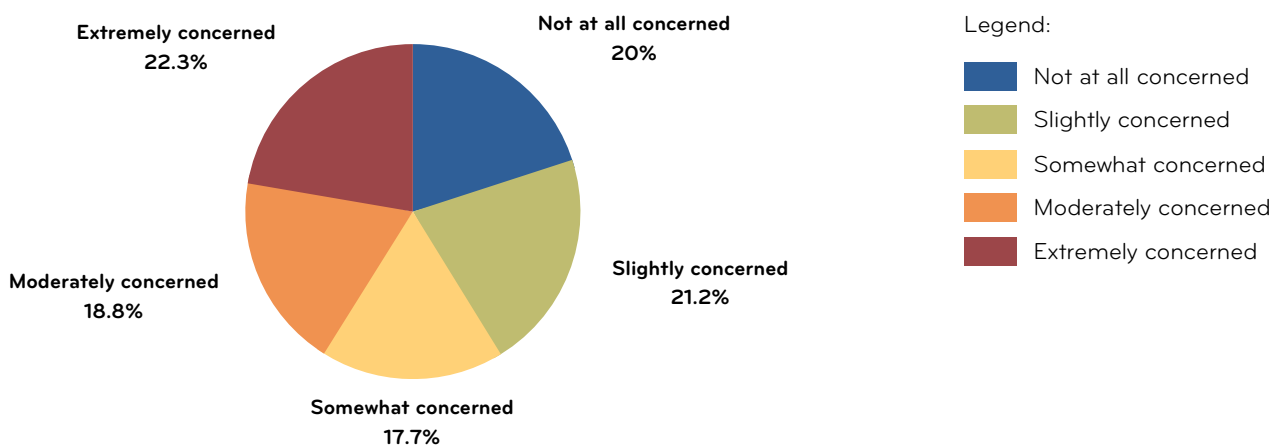


Key issues relate to educational access and inclusion, quality of education, and pathways for young people.

Educational access and inclusion

In the survey, 80% of community members are concerned about access to quality education in Collie, of whom 22.4% are extremely concerned (57.9% female, 42.1% male).

Figure 2: Level of community concern about access to quality education



This issue was also raised in all workshops. People identified various groups of people in Collie who experience issues of access and inclusion in education.

Wilman community members stress the importance of training and education opportunities that focus on practical learnings, not just theoretical, so that those who cannot read or write well can still gain meaningful employment.

Similarly, parents of children with disabilities identify a lack of suitable education options for children with autism and other neurodiversities, and a lack of support for children who struggle in mainstream schools.

Challenges include costs and stresses of accessing appropriate schooling and/or supports without necessary infrastructure in Collie.



The Collie Library and MyTime program are very important for parents of neurodiverse children:

“MyTime...in the community, it's the only place that you can go in and not be judged for any of you or your child or – like, we got kicked out of three different playgroups because my child's autistic, and they didn't want to deal with it. (Workshop 4)”

A family shares that a fenced playground in town would provide huge support to them in homeschooling their children:

“We actually drive to Eaton just to go to the park. Because there's nowhere safe here, nothing is fenced, they're never fenced. (Workshop 4)”

Some parents also raise concerns about a shortage of suitable high school options in Collie:

“When I moved here I was looking at education and we have a really low level of Year 12 or graduation level education, below national average or national standard.

And I know we have amazing primary schools, we've got so many of them, there are so many options for young kids, but then once you get to high school there's the one option.

And I live across the road from high school, I see the police there every day and I have friends who are dealing with issues in the high school.

And I wonder if there's anything we can do to help, because I'm actually looking at going down the hill for high school, when I live across the road. (Workshop 4)”

Community members identify the need for quality education opportunities in Collie that are accessible and inclusive across primary, secondary, post-secondary and vocational education.

Pathways for young people

Many community members discuss lack of opportunities for young people in Collie, with limited pathways for young people to pursue a career locally:

“My main concern is that there will be a variety of career options for my children to pursue so they can remain living in Collie (if that is their wish). (Survey 103, female, aged 36, working part-time and caring for children)”

The local power station is reducing recruitment numbers, which is affecting younger Collie community members:

“There are not a lot of apprenticeships offered in Collie anymore as they used to be. From (a workforce of) 800 you'd have a percentage of apprentices and (with numbers) down to 200, that percentage would shrink with that number. (Workshop 2)”

Several people believe young people have “lack of industry trade” (Survey 47, male, aged 58, working full-time) and lack of training opportunities.

Young people and people on low incomes will need new opportunities and support to keep the town open and economically viable. A related challenge is retaining young people in Collie.

Community members share that due to diminishing opportunities and reduced education options, many young people relocate for post-secondary education and/or their careers.



“It's a lack of the sort of trades that kids can go into after finishing school. We do have a lot of gifted kids who come through school that then have to go away to the universities and I've had that experience with my eldest daughter. So we had to fund her living away from home doing tertiary education. That's a problem. (Workshop 2)

They go away and they don't come back. There has to be something for them to come back to. (Workshop 2)

Several community members promote Cultural Ranger programs with well-paid jobs on Country for Wilman community members.

These programs previously existed in Collie, and there is concern about lack of opportunities and permanent employment for those who completed the course:

“They've gone through their courses, they're both qualified, now we need them to have jobs. (Workshop 3)

We had 17 young fellas come down to the Noongar centre to fill in for 4 ranger positions and then they turned around and said, "oh, it's not permanent". So, ... stick that up your arse, we don't want that. (Workshop 1)

Community members want young people in Collie to have employment pathways that enable local, meaningful work.



5. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, HOUSING, AND SERVICES



This section shares community perspectives on how the economic changes and climate change impact provision of local infrastructure, facilities, and services in Collie. It focuses on housing, health and social services, transport and sport and recreation.

5.1 Community assets

In the workshops, community members listed many existing infrastructure, facilities and services that are important to them in Collie, such as:

Schools and TAFE

The library

Art galleries

The post office

Museums

The cemetery

Churches

The mural trail

Two major supermarkets

Local small businesses

Emergency services

Art galleries

The post office

Museums

Hospital and medical services

Childcare

Aged care facilities

The Men's Shed

Parks, playgrounds and campgrounds

Housing, including social housing

Community services such as the Collie Family Centre, the Child and Parent Centre and the Red Cross

Mental health supports, such as Grow and the Suicide Prevention Network

Many people are concerned that reduced population and “shrinking of the town” (Survey 102) will result in reduced or loss of services, such as in the hospital, medical services, education, justice, and government services more broadly:

“Services are leaving town. Sports clubs closing due to lack of participants. Volunteers and committee members no longer available. (Survey 84, female, aged 64, retired)

Investment may reduce in the area leading to... reduced budgets to maintain infrastructure, investment in the area reduces with lacking confidence, more shops become vacant and we need to travel out of Collie already for some essentials such as kids supplies and clothing. (Survey 40, male, aged 61, working full-time, Aboriginal)

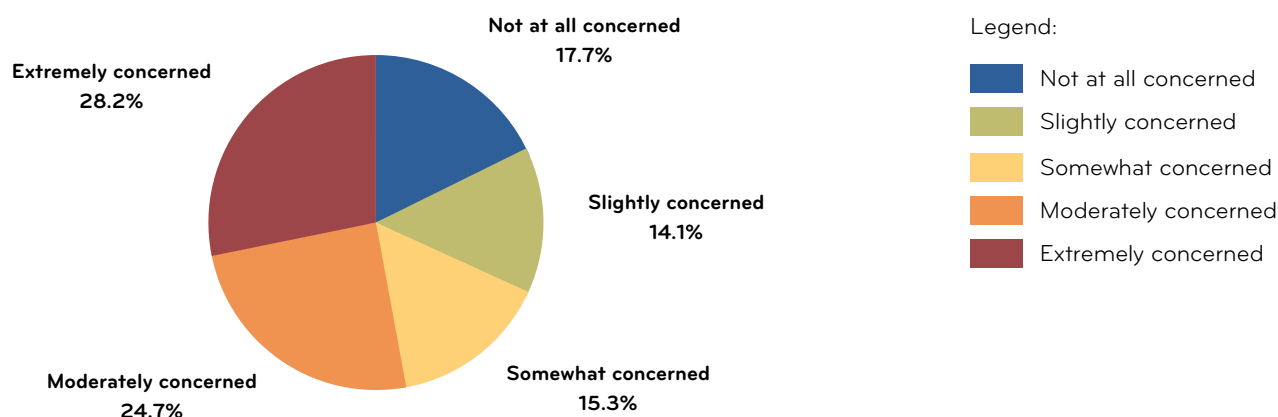
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Community members say it is important to maintain Collie's services.

5.2 Housing

In the survey, 82.4% of community members were concerned about access to quality housing in Collie, of whom 28.2% were extremely concerned (70.8% female, 25.0% male).

Figure 3: Level of community concern about access to quality housing



Common concerns include unaffordable prices for renting or purchasing housing, difficulty finding affordable housing due to high demand and low supply, the need for more housing for Aboriginal people, insufficient social housing and long waitlists, and increased homelessness. Many people share difficulties in accessing affordable housing for rent or purchase.

Community members explain that for many years, people from Perth have been relocating to Collie for a tree-change and capitalising on cheaper house prices (relative to Perth), while low-income households struggle to find suitable rentals.

Tourism also affects local housing stock and affordability, as more residential houses are being converted to holiday rentals.

“

When the houses go on the market now they're getting snapped up pretty quickly and we're finding it's people from the city coming down either for a tree change or a quality home in the country and they're elderly people as well or past 50s. (Workshop 2)

You cannot get a rental at all. (Workshop 2)

”

Community members also observe a shortage of social housing in Collie, citing a 10-year wait for public housing, and a lack of culturally-appropriate social housing for Aboriginal community members.

Furthermore, “public housing is notorious for being very badly constructed and a lot of housing actually don't support disability” (Workshop 1).

In worst case scenarios, some people are experiencing homelessness because they cannot find housing. When a community member and her family relocated to Collie they “lived in a tent in a caravan park for four months waiting for a house” (Workshop 3).

Others say:

“

We've been looking for how long now? Almost a year. We live with my sister, and we've got four kids. So, we're looking at a two rooms and just the rental properties, as soon as you go up for a rental property there's at least 20 to 30 people. (Workshop 4)

People are moving out to the bush and camping. (Workshop 2)

”

Some community members also identify the impacts of a changing climate on the costs and capacity to heat and cool houses, with increased costs as climate change worsens:

“

The higher temperatures will see an increase in energy consumption. As we continue to discard people who fail middle class standards and hypocrisies, the gap between the haves and have nots will widen, increasing social fragmentation and reducing community resilience. (Survey 77, female, aged 50, working part-time)

”

Public housing is poorly equipped to deal with fluctuating temperatures:

“

A lot of housing actually doesn't support disability, so they don't have appropriate cooling or heating in winter. (Workshop 1)

”

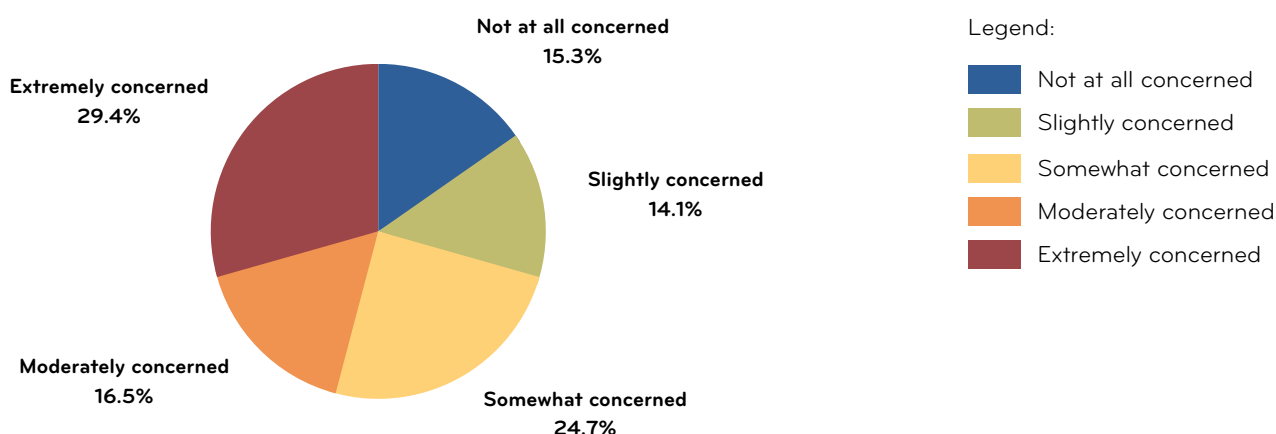
Equitable local access to quality, affordable and sustainable housing is seen as a central to Collie's just transition.

5.3 Health and social services

Health and social services are very important to Collie community members.

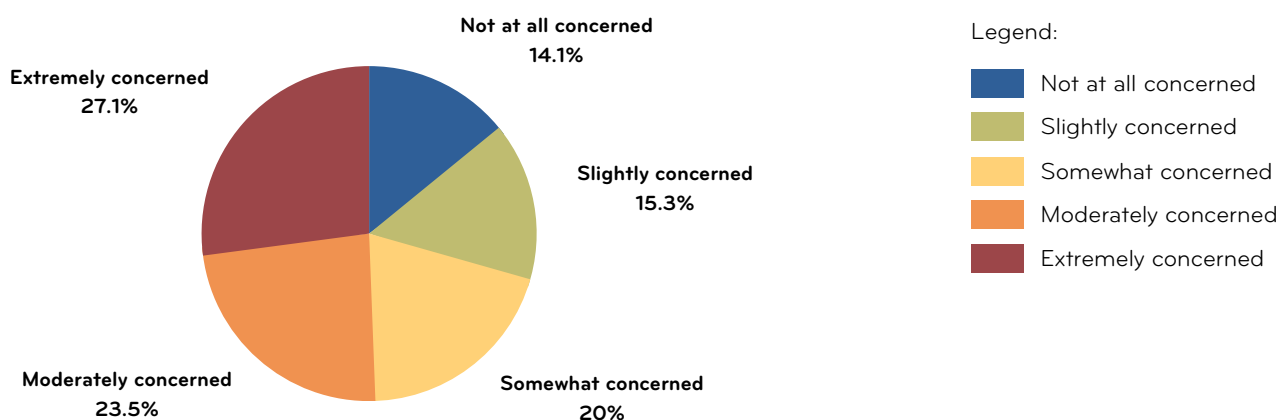
In the survey, 84.7% of community members are concerned about access to quality health services, and 29.4% are extremely concerned (60% female, 40% male).

Figure 4: Level of community concern about access to quality health services



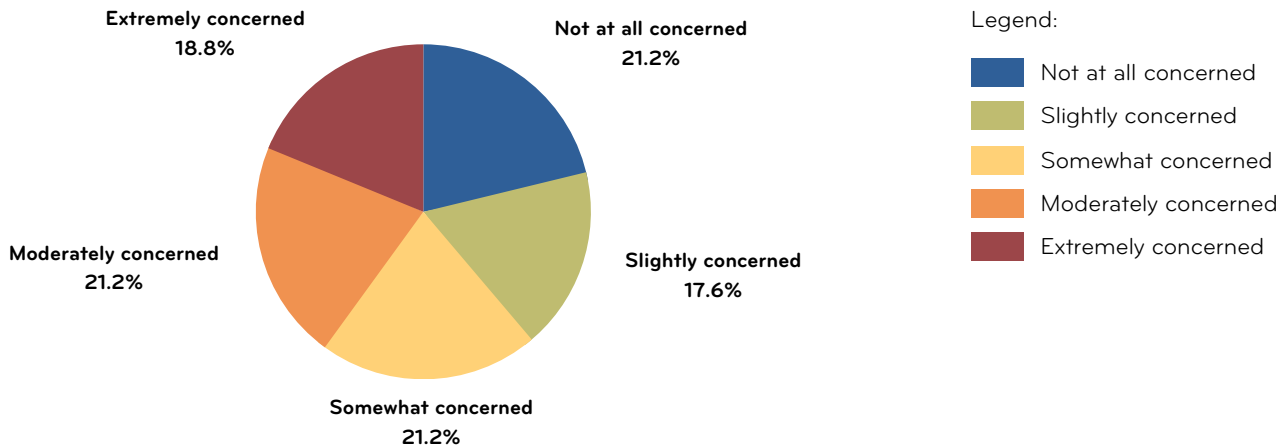
Similarly, 85.9% are concerned about access to quality social services, and 27.1% are extremely concerned (56.5% female, 43.5% male).

Figure 5: Level of community concern about access to quality social services



Access to quality food and basic supplies is also a concern for 78.8% of community members, and 18.8% are extremely concerned (62.5% female, 37.5% male).

Figure 6: Level of community concern about access to quality food and basic supplies



Community members describe difficulties accessing reliable, adequate and affordable health and mental health care, disability support and therapy services, reliable, regular public transport, and fresh produce.



Although individual experiences vary, there is a shared belief that one of the biggest challenges of living in Collie is accessing care and support, especially for people on a low income, older people, people with disability and people supporting family members with disability. The Collie hospital is very important in Collie's health infrastructure.

Community members reflect on the winding back of services in Collie, such as Centrelink and banks. They need to travel to Bunbury or Perth to access many services, or use teleconferencing, and experience long wait time for appointments:

“

If you've got a child that needs help for example or you need to go to some [appointments], you have to take your children, the whole family out of school for example to go to Bunbury because you can't get down there and back within school hours on public transport. (Workshop 4)

It's generally speaking a reduction in mental health services and ... support services... And the ones that are here drive in two hours a fortnight or something ... We keep hearing, "well that's okay because we're close to Bunbury" but it's not okay because those people don't have transport to Bunbury to meet those appointments and to access those services. (Workshop 4)

”

For Aboriginal people, a lack of local culturally safe services means members of their community often wait for the South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) to come to town. However, there is limited local access to SWAMS:

“

With SWAMS... make sure you get sick on Monday. (Workshop 3)

”

Families with neurodivergent children experience challenges accessing therapies due to logistical and financial burdens:

“

There's no OT, psych, speech, anything. We've actually outsourced to South Australia to find speech and OT services. (Workshop 1)

I have a son who's diagnosed autistic. And we've actually just moved to drop all his therapies. It's too hard here, it is far too difficult to get a therapist to come up the hill and see him on a regular basis. (Workshop 1)

”

In comparison, some community members have found accessing mental health support in Collie to be easy and very important to their overall wellbeing. In particular, the Radiance Group, an initiative from Waratah, is a positive example of mental health services available in Collie for women.

Community members are concerned that if more people move away from Collie for employment, there will be less local access to services.

Community members recognise the need for more services as climate change intensifies, in areas such as health, mental health, disability support, and food.

Community members maintain, very strongly, that equitable access to quality health and social services is central to Collie's transition.



5.4 Transport

Community members describe challenges of surviving in Collie without a car, or without enough money to buy petrol, which is exacerbated by rising fuel prices.

There are limited public transport services between Collie and Bunbury, and without a car, it is very difficult for community members to access support services, work, and education outside the community:

“ [For] the kids therapy services, we have to drive to Bunbury or Perth... because nothing is in town. (Workshop 4)

[Young person was] going to TAFE, down in Bunbury, catch the bus, and then the bus service was cut in half, but then he couldn't finish your white card, he was doing the course, he was only doing it for 12 weeks, and then he couldn't get down to Bunbury. (Workshop 4)

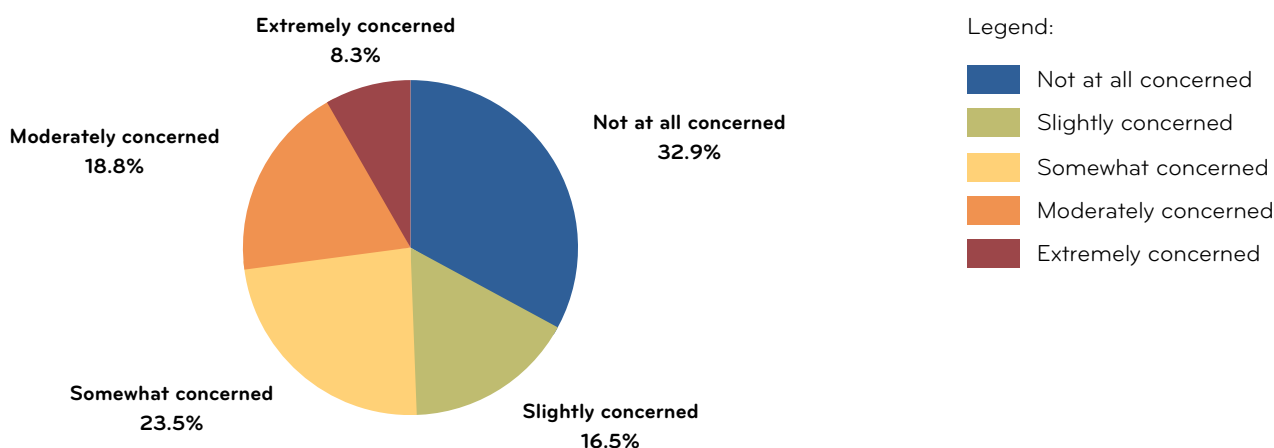
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Community members identify the need for the transition to enable equitable access to quality, reliable and affordable transport.

5.5 Sport and recreation

In the survey, 67.1% of community members expressed concern about recreation and leisure in Collie, with 8.2% expressing extreme concern (42.9% female, 57.1% male).

Figure 7: Level of community concern about recreation and leisure



Community members value many sport and recreation assets, including swimming holes (e.g. Black Diamond Lake and Lake Kepwari), outdoor play spaces, club sports, and the skate park.

Local sport clubs rely on volunteers, but the transition to shift work at the mines and FIFO work has detrimentally affected sport, particularly availability of local adults to volunteer and play.

Community members are concerned that if more families leave Collie, there will be less volunteers and players to keep sporting groups active.

A community member explains that recent government tourism spending has included mountain bike tracks.

However, these are expensive hobbies and while they may bring tourists to Collie, it comes at the expense of investing in infrastructure that may be more accessible to low income families:

“The funding got spent on mountain bike tracks... You really do need to be quite rich to go on mountain bike tracks... Whereas ... there is an ageing population and there is a really high disability population which would all benefit from a heated pool. (Workshop 1)”

Community members highlight the importance of quality and accessible sport and recreation options that respond to the needs of local residents.

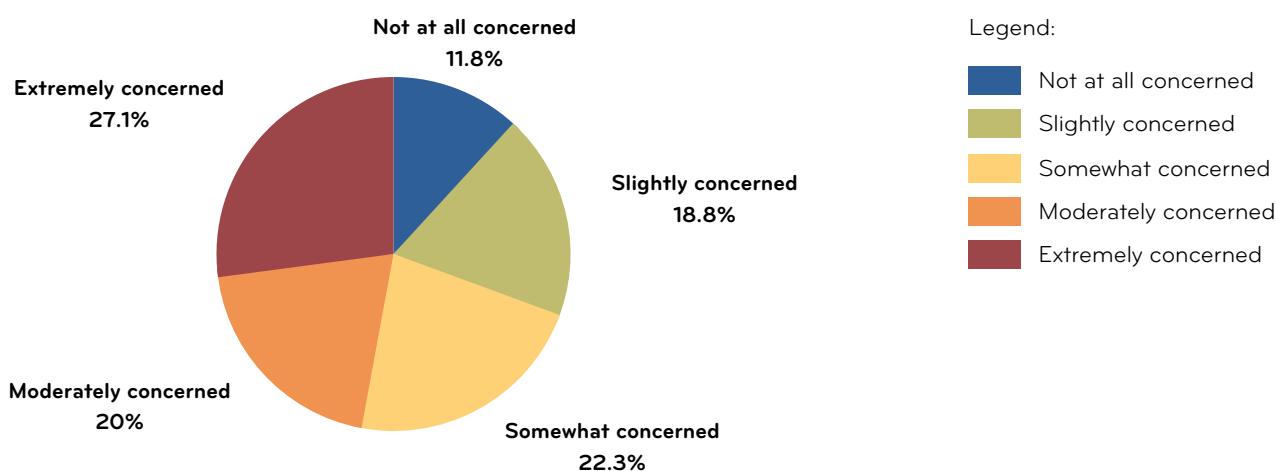
6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS



This section shares community views on climate change, especially bushfire, floods, storms and cyclones, and the environmental impacts of climate change on Wilman Boodja, and existing resources to address these challenges.

In the survey, 89.2% of community members expressed concern about climate change, with 27.1% being extremely concerned (47.8% female, 52.2% male).

Figure 8: Level of community concern about climate change



6.1 Bushfire, floods, storms, and drought

In the survey, 95.3% of community members expressed concern about bushfires in Collie, with 38.8% being extremely concerned (51.5% female, 48.5% male); along with all four workshops.

Community members are concerned about increased frequency and severity of bushfire in Collie, due to reduced rainfall, increased temperatures, and unpredictable winds.

They anticipate "more devastating fires" (Survey 6, female, aged 71, retired).

Workshop discussions considered the challenges and increased risks of prescribed burning, poor air quality attributed to those burns, and increased prevalence of fires each summer:

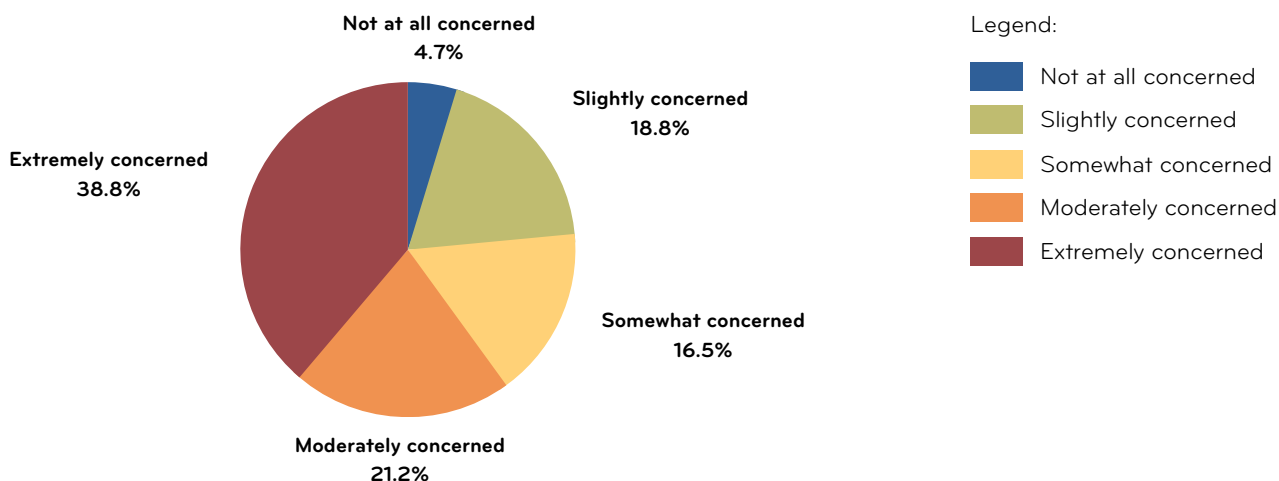
“

It's almost like summers have been extended for another two months. (Workshop 4)

The summer just gone there were four fires in and around here... So many fires. You looked at the map and there was just fire, fire, fire, fire. (Workshop 2)

”

Figure 9: Level of community concern about bushfires



Some community members identify the negative mental health impacts of climate change and fire risk on them and the wider community:

“

Stress levels, yeah... the minute I hear or smell smoke yeah, I'm thinking "right, what's going on?" and you get on the phone, the emergency website and to see what's actually going on in terms of a fire. (Workshop 2)

I worry about the mental impact in all this you know, more than the actual climate. You know, whether it's going to be as bad as what we predict and all that, I think to have that weighing on their shoulders is terrible for them because they [kids] can't do much about it. (Workshop 2)

”

However, community members are also observing more community apathy towards fires and fire risks, due to rising number of bush fires in recent years:

“

It becomes pretty normal. (Workshop 4)

A lot of people just don't think it's going to happen to them and then they're relying on our services. There's only so many fire trucks, you can't all have a fire truck each. (Workshop 3)

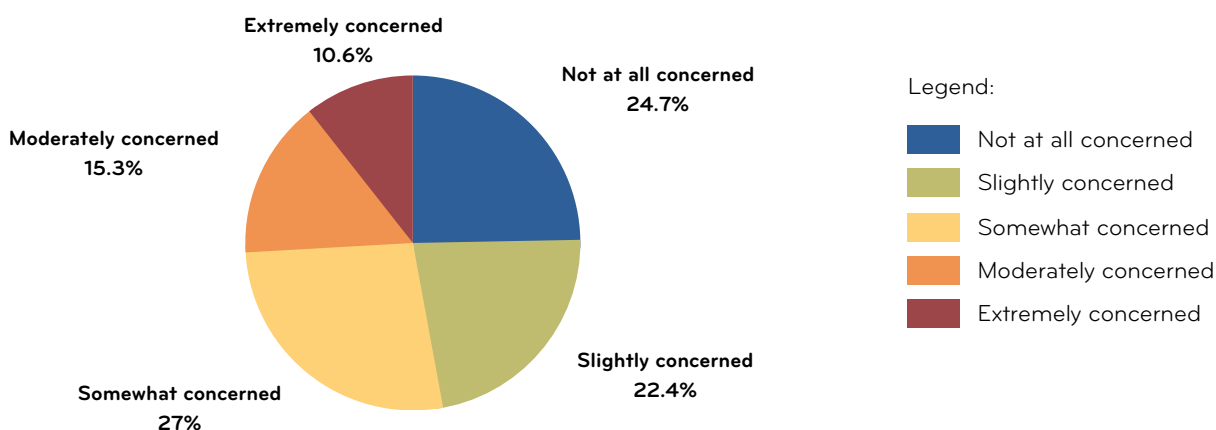
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Some community members are concerned about government investment in outdoor tourism due to the risk of bushfires:

“It's a worry that if we put a lot of eggs in the basket of (BMX + hiking) trails if we're going to be at risk of bushfires. (Workshop 3)”

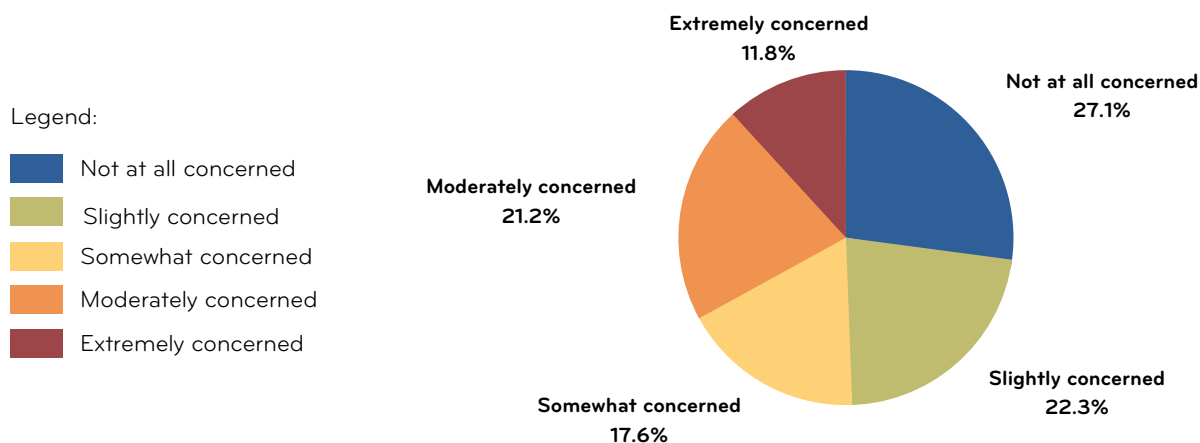
In the survey, 75.3% of community members are concerned about floods in Collie, of whom 10.6% are extremely concerned (55.6% female, 44.4% male).

Figure 10: Level of community concern about floods



Similarly, 72.9% of community members are concerned about severe storms and cyclones, with 11.8% extremely concerned (50% female, 40% male).

Figure 12: Level of community concern about severe storms and cyclones



While overall rainfall in the region is decreasing, community members observe that serious wet weather events bring large rainfall in a small time period, increasing flood risk.

Community members explain that the impacts of wet weather events are felt widely in the community, particularly amongst people experiencing homelessness:

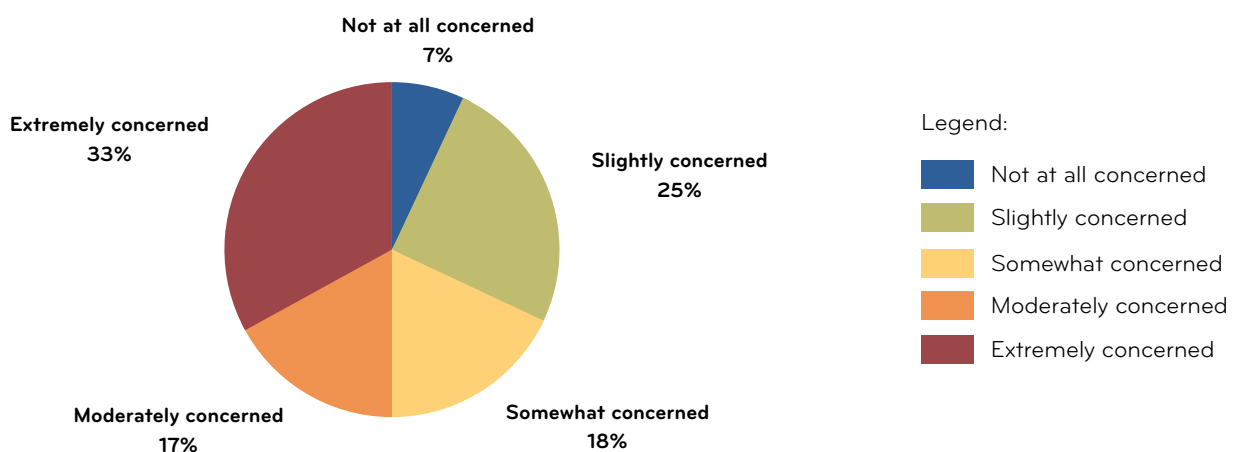
“Our tent flooded and we’re using all of our blankets and everything to hold the water out. We had the kids’ uniforms in the car, so they had dry uniforms to put on the next morning... I know there were a lot of people who are currently living in their tents and stuff here in town. (Workshop 4)

I still got some cement floors because we can’t even afford to replace the flooring that we had to pull out because of the mould when we took over the house. (Workshop 4)

”

Finally, in the survey, 92.8% of community members expressed concern about drought, with 21.2% extremely concerned (61.1% female, 33.3% male).

Figure 11: Level of community concern about droughts



Community members explain that the increasing risk of bushfire, floods, storms, and droughts must be key considerations in the process and decision-making of Collie’s transition, with disaster risk resilience strategies that respond to the needs and lived experiences of local people in all their diversities.

6.2 Environmental impacts of climate change

Community members are concerned that climate change, particularly reduced rainfall, will damage ecosystems. They are concerned about "less water in the rivers and waterways" (Survey 82, female, aged 50, working full-time), "drier vegetation" (Survey 50, female, aged 61, retired), "degradation of the bushland" (Survey 2, male, aged 31, working full-time), "loss of habitat" (Survey 54, male, aged 35 working full-time), "loss of biodiversity" (Survey 16, male, aged 72, retired), and "mass extinction of fauna and flora" (Survey 1, female, aged 49, working part-time).

People are worried about "massively reduced streamflow" (Survey 93, gender not specified, aged 50, working full-time), very low water levels, and reduced water quality and access. This may cause water shortages for the community.



Wilman Traditional Owners are observing the impacts of climate change in the patterns of the six Noongar seasons:

“

We go this way ... we can't go that way, it dictates what we do. Now I look at them flowers ... oh, they've come out early. So I go looking for the berries in the bush ... there's none and then I sit down here and think ... there's no goanna or bobtail and then all of a sudden a month or two later they'll start appearing and I think about the bush.

I said that's not right because these things here come out when that comes out and the berries and that are not coming out either because that tells us when the time is ... the bush tells us. (Workshop 1)

Last week the kids caught a turtle in the net, and they didn't know how to eat it so they brought it up to me... I showed them how to kill it and eat it. When I opened it up ... there was something wrong with it ... so I just put it back in the water. It was dead but you couldn't eat it because it had these cysts on it. (Workshop 1)

”

Other community members also observe changes to native plants and animals:

“

[My] native plants died this year because it's too hot and too dry for too long. (Workshop 2)

”

Environmental changes have health, cultural and spiritual impacts for Wilman people, affecting Bilya (rivers) and cultural places, and their ability to be informed by Country about how and when to hunt or seek food sources.



Traditional Owners discussed the cultural impacts of environmental changes:

“

[The River is] the life of the community. That's where we hunt in the bushes too, see. That's where we walk through the bush ... and you see the bush out there it's not the same. It's lacking rain and it's very open and there's not many kangaroos as well. So, the feed, they go to the farmers property and end up eating their bush tucker. (Workshop 1)

”

Community members maintain that just transition planning must respond to the impacts of climate change on Boodja (Country), Kep (Water) and Bilya (Rivers).

6.3 Existing resources to address climate challenges in Collie

Community members highlight Collie's strategic importance as a protective factor for bushfires, along with the region's large water supply and the nearby mine sites that are well equipped with their own firefighting crews:

“

We've got the volunteer fire brigade, SES. We've got a pretty good backup in fire fighting crews. The mines and the power station in Worsley have got their own fire fighting emergency crews as well, so they assist. (Workshop 2)

”



However, community members also note that the firefighting personnel are ageing, and that young people have less willingness and capacity to volunteer.

Other identified existing resources to address climate challenges in Collie include the WA Government's transition funding, the highly skilled workforce capable of rebuilding, and strong, local union membership.

Community members identify opportunities for the just transition to enhance Collie's knowledge and resources to address climate challenges in the community.

7. WHO ARE HARDEST HIT?



Everyone in Collie is impacted by both economic changes and climate change; but some groups of people are more vulnerable to these impacts.

Community members say that the transition from coal will involve significant loss of jobs, with many families and workers leaving town.

This population decrease will impact local facilities, services, clubs, and opportunities, with reduced funding and service improvement in the community:

“Community groups will find it hard to maintain members and volunteers. (Survey 54, male, aged 56, working full-time)

Loss of medical and support services, loss of education, ie Tafe. (Survey 57, female, aged 63, working part-time)

Sports clubs may be even less able to field teams than they are now. Perhaps there will be less need for club facilities and more need for casual recreational facilities. (Survey 53, female, aged 63, retired)

Community members are also concerned about mental health impacts across the community of both the transition and climate change, and the lack of services to support all community members, including the lack of housing. They perceive a growing "division between those who have money and those that don't" (Survey 128, female, aged 53, working part-time).

Community members also identify general impacts of climate change in Collie. Health risks include respiratory illnesses and skin cancers, increased stress, and poor mental health.

Some people are concerned about food shortages and "higher prices and less availability of fresh foods" (Survey 28, female, aged 62, working part-time) and "poor water quality" (Survey 114, female, aged 43, working part-time).

Who are hardest hit? - Workers



Community members are concerned about the impacts of the transition on workers in affected industries (including Synergy and coal mine employees and contractors), along with other industries such as retail, tourism and services, and local small businesses.

Workers may experience loss of jobs, reduced wages, difficulties finding alternative work, and will require redeployment and skills training. In particular, older workers may experience difficulties retraining, finding another job, or are forced to retire early, and casual workers may not receive the same level of support as permanent staff. Some workers may need to leave Collie for work, and workers who lose their jobs may need to choose between taking up FIFO work (with "less time with family" (Survey 2, male, aged 31, working full-time)) or lower wages. They may experience "difficulty adjusting to new job skills" (Survey 99, male, aged 42, working full-time).

If workers are unable to find a new job with similar income, they may experience financial stress covering living costs, with flow-on effects on individual and family mental health and wellbeing. Some community members identify positive impacts of the transition for workers include improved health, a new way of life, new industries, and more money coming into the town.

Community members say the environmental impacts of climate change are likely to negatively affect Collie's tourism industry, which will affect workers.

Similarly, climate change affects local farmers and forestry workers, with difficulties growing crops, decreased production, and income reduction alongside increased cost of living. They will experience "greater difficulties in farming management" (Survey 55, male, aged 61, working full-time, Aboriginal), and increased "stress and perhaps anger" (Survey 76, female, aged 54, unemployed). First responders in Collie will also "have to deal with bigger, more frightening disasters" (Survey 36, female, aged 80, volunteer).

Casual workers are not getting any of the benefits that permanent workers are. (Survey 12, female, aged 30, working full-time and caring for children)

The employees and their families, such as partners and children may suffer from mental health issues (Survey 1, female, aged 49, working part-time).

If [workers] can adapt then I'm sure they will in fact thrive. (Survey 106, female, aged 28, unemployed and caring for children)

Less water in rivers and dams on farms will make it harder to grow crops. (Survey 13, male, aged 37, working full-time)

Who are hardest hit? - Families

Collie's economic changes may see some families moving away for work, while parents who remain in Collie may need to work FIFO, accept a lower income or become unemployed. Both moving away or remaining in Collie can be stressful for all family members.

Families may experience financial impacts of reductions in house values, disposable incomes, and living standards.

Climate change exacerbates these issues. Community members believe that extreme events such as fires could destroy homes and businesses, with "cost of living increase, mental health problems, job insecurity [and] health risks" (Survey 7, female, aged 52, carer).



“Young families setting themselves up in life will have to choose if there is going to be enough of a future for their children and if investing in housing is a smart choice. (Survey 104, male, aged 37, working full-time)”

Who are hardest hit? - Low income households



Economic transition and climate change are particularly difficult for people on low incomes, especially people who receive low social security benefits.

People on low incomes have less resources to relocate for work, cover utilities bills to cope with increased heat, or replace property if destroyed in an extreme weather event.

“They're the group that's always affected by any sort of change and they have the least resources to fall back on. (Workshop 5)”

Who are hardest hit? - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Closure of local businesses, loss of employment and job insecurity will affect Aboriginal peoples through loss of medical and support services, loss of education opportunities, lack of affordable housing, and the need to relocate off Country.

However, an Aboriginal community member believes the transition to clean energy will have “better outcomes for cultural healing” (Survey 119, male, aged 66, retired, Aboriginal).

There also may be opportunities to engage young Aboriginal people in new employment opportunities.

Community members also recognise that impacts of climate change on Boodja (Country), Kep (Water) and Bilya (River) have profound impacts for Aboriginal peoples in Collie. Identified impacts include loss of biodiversity (flora and fauna), reduced access to traditional food sources, and damages to sacred places and sites, which affects traditional and ceremonial practices and Wilman health and wellbeing.

Aboriginal community members already experience difficulties accessing health and social services in Collie, and the need for these services may increase as climate change intensifies.

“First Nation peoples' connection to Country needs to be considered. (Survey 10, female, aged 34, working part-time and caring for children)”

Who are hardest hit? - Children and young people



Many community members feel that Collie's economic changes will cause a "loss of local opportunities for young people" (Survey 2, male, aged 31, working full-time). They are concerned that more young people will need to move away from Collie for training, apprenticeships, and work.

Youth unemployment may rise, and work that is available in Collie may be casual and uncertain without prospects of permanency. Local apprentices may not have job opportunities at home.

There is concern that families with children and young people will need to leave Collie for work. If the local population decreases, there will be fewer education offerings at the local schools and Tafe, reducing employment pathways for young people.

Community members are concerned that children and young people may feel stress, worry, anxiety and uncertainty about their futures. Worries about the future relate to work and career options, housing, "family stability" (Survey 133, female, aged 54, unemployed), and climate change.

Community members also raise concerns about the quality of life for children and young people in a climate changed future. They anticipate that children and young people will experience "increased insurance costs, food shortages, increased cost of living" (Survey 99, male, aged 42, working full-time), lack of climate-responsive infrastructure, poor air quality, and issues relating to "access to fresh water, increased impacts on natural disaster, increased adversity, food insecurity, mental health problems, housing displacement, health risks, less access to natural resources" (Survey 7, female, aged 52, carer).

“

The number of jobs for young people will diminish in number and perhaps in remuneration. Career paths may become vastly different to those which may have been expected. (Survey 36, female, aged 80, volunteer)

Young people being displaced from their community and worried about their future jobs or where their parents are going to live. Taking up the family worries and responsibilities. (Survey 3, female, aged 61, unemployed)

Our children may not know native flora and fauna. (Survey 118, female, aged 53, working part-time)

”

Who are hardest hit? - Disabled people and older people



People with disabilities and older people must be cared for and supported if Collie is going to transition well and be resilient to climate change.

Community members are very concerned that economic changes in Collie will result in reduced services and facilities, which will particularly impact people with disability and older people.

This risk increases if Collie has an ageing population due to influx of retirees and relocation of local families for work.

Community members identified climate risks for people with disability and older people, including health issues such as heat related illnesses and respiratory issues due to poor air quality, and reduced ability to cope with climate change due to increased cost of living and mobility constraints.

“

As a community, we got to look after our special needs people, we've got to provide for them, and we've got to bring them along as part of the transition as well.
(Workshop 5)

Being elderly they may not be financial to pay for aircon or other heating.
(Survey 132, female, aged 48 working full-time)

”

Who are hardest hit? - Women, non-binary peoples and LGBTQIA+ peoples



The transition and climate change are likely to affect women, men, and non-binary peoples differently, and LGBTQIA+ peoples may experience additional challenges.

In Collie, women are more likely than men to be single parents caring for children and often earn lower wages. As such, women are affected by reduced work opportunities, reduced wages, rising living costs, rising house prices and lack of social and affordable housing, and reduced access to services in Collie.

Some community members also highlighted the need for local services and spaces to be accessible and safe for LGBTQIA+ peoples. A community member wants more support and counselling for LGBTQIA+ young people.

The lack of adequate and appropriate childcare options in Collie can be a significant barrier for women to work. Many women have less financial resources (including income and superannuation) to cope with change. However, a community member says, "I think women will adapt and thrive much better than men" (Survey 93, gender not specified, aged 50, working full-time).

The impacts of climate change are also gendered. A community member identifies that family and domestic violence may increase with the impacts of economic changes and disasters.

Single-parent households, usually headed by women, will have less financial resources to cope with costs for heating and cooling homes, and in disaster recovery. Emergency services must be appropriate and safe for women and LGBTQIA+ peoples.

“

The stress on their relationships, caring for families, added job pressures to women who bring in a second income. Loss of friendships. Lack of training for women. (Survey 3, female, aged 61, unemployed)

”

8. WHAT IS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE A JUST TRANSITION FOR COLLIE THAT LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND?



Throughout the survey and workshops, community members shared what is needed to address the social justice challenges of economic change and climate change in Collie, and what a successful transition would look like. In this section, we share key strategies, based on community perspectives, for a just transition in Collie that leaves no one behind.

Community members who participated in the project shared a strong community position that the WA Government's definition of just transition must expand to support social, economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing and equity for the whole community. They formulated seven strategies to strengthen Collie's just transition.

STRATEGY 1: A JUST TRANSITION MUST CENTRE BOODJA (COUNTRY) AND THE RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND VOICES OF WILMAN PEOPLES

Community members call for the transition process to care for Boodja (Country) through environmental management, land rehabilitation, repairing and cleaning the river system (Survey 108, female, aged 52, unemployed). This involves "nurturing the microclimate of the Valley" (Survey 82, female, aged 50, working full-time) to "minimise environmental change" (Survey 64, male, aged 57, working full-time).

For members of the Wilman community in Collie, a successful transition has strong representation of Wilman Elders and people with cultural authority across all levels of decision-making and government.

This includes caring for Boodja by paid Cultural Rangers, training and employment for young Wilman people, and local government engaging with Wilman Traditional Custodians for all decisions regarding Wilman Boodja.

“ We want to do things on Country that they destroyed. All this stuff on Boodja is connected to Aboriginal people. All animals are our stories.

They should sit down and listen. The Government should allocate funding to the Wilman people. We don't want to put it in our pocket, we want to set something up for young people and future generations. We want On Country learning and intergenerational sharing of culture. (Analysis workshop) ”

Elders suggest that in Collie's fight against climate change, local Wilman custodians and knowledges are best placed to lead the local government and the wider community in responding to the impacts of climate change, protecting communities, and caring for Boodja.

They suggest that local Cultural Ranger programs could be expanded to include Wilman people working on their Country to build community resilience and protect Boodja from unsustainable development: “They've got the knowledge and they could take it back and they'll be heard” (Workshop 3).

Elders also stress that in the just transition and emergence of new industries in Collie (such as the extraction of lithium and other forms of mining for renewable energy), there must be “no more disturbance of Country and Bilya” (Analysis workshop). This includes protecting the Yarragadee Aquifer from water extraction. Elders emphasise that all decisions require consent.

“ Don't do anything on Wilman Boodja without our Free, Prior, Informed and Continuing Consent. (Analysis workshop) ”

STRATEGY 2: A JUST TRANSITION PROCESS MUST STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

Community members want the just transition to strengthen the Collie community. This includes maintaining a “large stable population to work, earn and spend in Collie” (Survey 84, female, aged 64, retired), with the same population of “8,500 people post the retirement of the power and coal industries” (Workshop 2).

This may require “clients, patients and customers to stay in town and support local businesses and services” (Survey 84), and businesses and industries employing people who live in Collie and participate in the community. It also involves attracting people (residents and visitors), businesses and industries to Collie.

People suggest that events and campaigns are held to “showcase Collie as a great town to live” (Survey 7, female, aged 35, working part-time and caring for children). This also includes supporting community members to engage in local committees and sports, and ensuring that new companies sponsor the community and contract local businesses. The transition must maintain community spirit:

“ I think that if we have got something of the same spirit that has kept us going for 125 years then we can say we've had a good transition. (Workshop 2) ”

STRATEGY 3: A JUST TRANSITION MUST ENGAGE AND COMMUNICATE WITH LOCAL AND DIVERSE VOICES AND LEADERS, AND FOSTER INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION IN TRANSITION PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

Community members call for strategic planning for Collie's transition with strengths-based activities and outcomes and strong government financial investment to address current issues and support "a stable transition to the new economy" (Survey 96, male, aged 55, working part-time).

They call for more consultation with diverse groups of people in the community, including Wilman Elders and other community leaders, and for diverse lived experiences to be represented in community planning and decision-making.

Community members also request that local and state governments collect and analyse demographic data about social justice issues related to the transition in Collie, such as rates of employment, wages, housing affordability, education, and health. It is important to analyse these trends over time to monitor the impacts and effectiveness of transition initiatives, and understand the dynamics of community needs and priorities.

Many people suggest that more public, open community meetings, workshops, and events are convened by government for community members in all their diversities to gather and discuss the transition:

“ If you are talking about people currently working in coal related industries, I think they would need assurances for future employment opportunities. Be transparent with future changes to Collie. Involve them in decision making. (Survey 124, female, aged 59, retired)

Ask them. Listen to them. Plan for change. (Survey 118, female, aged 53, working part-time)

”

Community members want more information, communication, and resources about the transition process, in accessible formats such as workshops and one-on-one support.

Community members emphasise that Government-led transition initiatives and programs must be well-promoted to enable broad community access and inclusion.

Some people also want to hear from other small communities who have gone through significant industry transitions.

STRATEGY 4: A JUST TRANSITION MUST ENABLE ALTERNATIVE, CLEAN INDUSTRIES THAT ENHANCE BOODJA (COUNTRY) AND THE COMMUNITY AND PROVIDE MEANINGFUL AND SECURE JOBS WITH DECENT WAGES, CONDITIONS, AND SUPPORT FOR WORKERS IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITIES

Community members who participated in the workshops and survey are very clear that a just transition for Collie must enable new, clean industries that are long-term and are protective of Boodja. Importantly, they want diverse job opportunities for the whole community, not just directly impacted workers in the coal industry.

Community members strongly express the importance of diversifying Collie's economic future, with diverse industries that leverage existing skills and support people already living in Collie:

“ Bold vision, attracting and retaining skilled workers. New industry to keep the families local, all of community support to build confidence that we are not being left stranded. (Survey 40, male, aged 34, working full-time)

Diversification of full time liveable income stream, availability of young families to live in the community, less reliability on welfare. (Survey 42, male, aged 42, working full-time)

”

Community members propose a range of possible new or extended industries, such as:

Heritage and Wilman Cultural Rangers caring for Country and community, including in disaster resilience

Renewable energy, hydroelectricity and storage

Environmental Management

Green-powered heavy industries

Tourism, especially eco-tourism, events, and health, wellness and relaxation tourism alongside existing investment in adventure tourism, sport and recreation

Social services, care work and family-friendly industries, including childcare and aged care

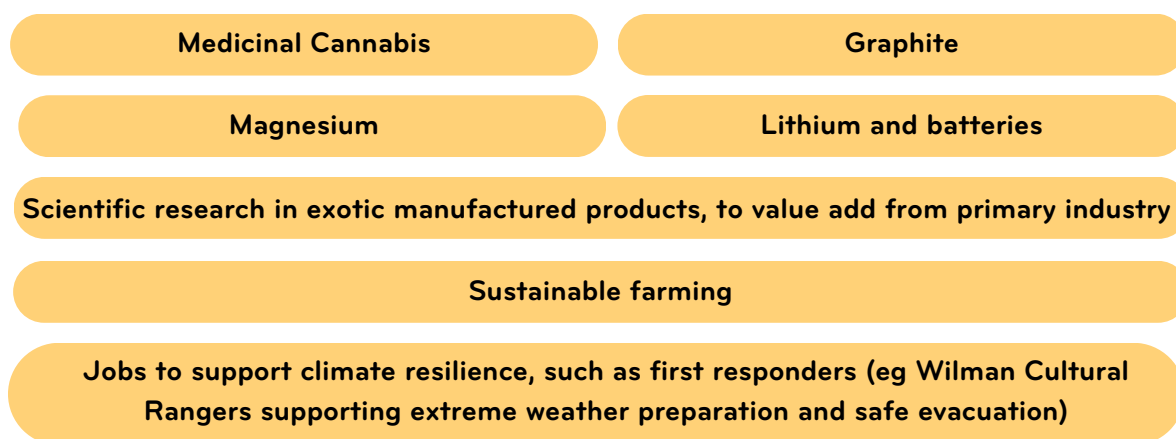
Healthcare (including mental health services)

Relocation of government offices to Collie

Renewable and sustainable manufacturing

Jobs in the transition process

Education and training enterprises



With its transition funding, the WA Government has already financially supported new industry development in Collie, such as medicinal cannabis, a graphite processing plant, and the Koolinup Emergency Services Centre, with a base for an emergency driver training school for emergency service workers and volunteers.

Community members encourage the development of socially and environmentally-sustainable industries and businesses, including promoting and incentivising co-operative models.

Several community members say that companies must be held accountable for their contribution to emissions, with actions such as investing in electric vehicles and renewable energy.

Community members believe that unions are very important in Collie and have a significant role in the transition away from coal.

They say that new, clean industries must provide secure and stable employment for community members with fair employment conditions that are responsive to diverse individual and family needs:

“

A family-friendly, Mum-friendly roster. (Workshop 2)

Long term employment with a reasonable income which will allow the town to prosper and continue develop. (Survey 55, male, aged 61, working full-time, Aboriginal)

”

Importantly, the transition must support all community members to participate in work, by addressing structural barriers such as caring responsibilities and racism. This includes ensuring equitable access to childcare, and addressing barriers to employment for workers with disability.

Several community members call for government and industry to provide workers in transition “genuine assistance” (Survey 13, male, aged 37, working full-time) such as “extra redundancy packages / financial incentives” (Survey 114, female, aged 43, working part-time) and assistance to retrain and find another job to remain in Collie.

Related to this, for those who are unemployed, the rate of Jobseeker, Disability Support Pension, Youth Allowance and other social security payments must be increased to enable recipients to afford the increasing costs of living, and live in dignity.

STRATEGY 5: A JUST TRANSITION PROCESS MUST PROVIDE QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE, AND AFFORDABLE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF ALL AGES AND DIVERSITIES

To achieve new, clean industries with sustainable jobs for existing and future workers, community members call for extensive education and training opportunities that are high quality, accessible and affordable, and relate to employment opportunities and skill gaps in Collie.

This extends from early childhood education through to higher education. Workers transitioning out of the coal industry require retraining to “assist with diversification and to help develop broader ideas” (Survey 55, male, aged 61, working full-time, Aboriginal). This includes providing one-to-one support, career guidance and counselling for workers, businesses and community members to diversify:

“ Free services and training and advice for small businesses to prepare 5-10 year business plans. (Survey 93, gender not specified, aged 50, working full-time)

Genuine opportunity to upskill or be retrained into another meaningful career/industry. (Survey 13, male, aged 37, working full-time)

”

The WA Government has recently established the Collie Jobs and Skills Centre, a free service that offers support, information and advice about training options and career planning; assistance with finding employment including updating resumés and writing job applications; and referral to other available support services. Community members highlight the importance of strong promotion of this service.

Community members also identify the need to support young people to upskill and actively pursue a career in Collie.

They call for a rigorous analysis of skills gaps and training needs in Collie, and providing a range of diverse education and training opportunities, including local Cultural Rangers training and expanding the local TAFE to include hospitality, nursing, childcare, aged care, and environmental studies.

Community members also require adequate child care to participate in education, training and volunteering. They also need “easily accessible job information” (Survey 78, female, aged 31, unemployed and caring for children).

Community members advocate for more education in the community and in schools to build local knowledge, skills, and resources in caring for the environment, living sustainably, and building resilience to climate change. Community members want opportunities such as community workshops and rebate programs to encourage pro-environment actions.

Community members also want education and training about the impacts of climate change, appropriate forms of climate change and disaster mitigation. They also want to learn about “being fire ready” (Survey 114, female, aged 43, working part-time), identifying disasters, and preparing for extreme events.

This includes “community capacity building such as supporting community groups” (Survey 54, male, aged 56, working full-time), and “educating our young people will need to focus on resilience and flexibility, adaptability” (Survey 36, female, aged 80, volunteer). This could generate paid employment for young people in the community, including Aboriginal young people.

STRATEGY 6: A JUST TRANSITION MUST PROVIDE ADEQUATE, AFFORDABLE, AND CULTURALLY-SAFE INFRASTRUCTURE, RESOURCES, AND SERVICES FOR THE BASIC NEEDS, HEALTH, AND WELLBEING OF ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Community members call for the transition process to fund the provision of adequate, affordable, and culturally-safe infrastructure, resources, and services in Collie to ensure that no one is left behind. Support for vulnerable populations is key to a successful transition.

Community members prioritise planning and development of Collie where a "culture of sustainability can thrive" (Survey 7, female, aged 52, carer). They want "guaranteed reliable green power with storage capacity" (Survey 32, male, 63, working full-time), "green spaces" (Survey 3, female, aged 61, unemployed), "train lines" (Survey 12, female, aged 30, working full-time and caring for children), "activities and recreation services" (Survey 54, male, aged 56, working full-time), and "swaps, markets, rules on events and business re single use plastic and waste, repair cafes so small steps that can create a huge ripple effect" (Survey 7).

Some also call for government spending for "new infrastructure to increase the liveability of Collie and make it more attractive to new residents" (Survey 101, male, aged 42, working full-time). Key to this is infrastructure that address barriers to equity and participation for community members across all lived experiences:

“ There’s a big, missed opportunity in town, of like, transitioning away from being like a fossil fuel working town into more of a family friendly, disability friendly, aged care – because there is a big ageing population. (Workshop 4) ”

Community members call for better provision of "basic living needs" (Survey 123, female, aged 63, retired and caring for children). They want more social and affordable housing, "help with food, water and shelter" (Survey 50, female, aged 61, retired), "ways to heat and cool houses" (Survey 48, female aged 64, retired) and "affordable insurance and alternate accommodation" (Survey 130, aged 53, working part-time).

Community members require well-funded health and wellbeing services (government and non-government) to be provided and made accessible in Collie - a "comprehensive return of services to our town" (Survey 118, female, aged 53, working part-time). Community members identify the need for services based in Collie to provide the following:

- **Comprehensive public healthcare, and more GPs**
- **Counselling services and mental health support services**
- **Accessible therapies for people with disability**
- **Aged care facilities**
- **Job retraining services and programs**
- **Subsidised and accessible public transport**
- **Accessible, affordable and culturally-responsive drug rehabilitation programs**
- **Increased social housing, including culturally-responsive public housing for Aboriginal community members**
- **Adequate accessible, affordable, long-day childcare**

- **Disability support services, including an accessible community space with specialised facilities that can be used by diverse community groups for communities activities and gatherings**

Parents with neurodivergent children also call for “playgrounds that are accessible for special needs kids” (Workshop 4), including “enclosed parks” (Survey 125, female, aged 53, retired) and indoor play spaces so their children can play safely. They also require a “single company” (Workshop 4) that offers a range of services in occupational therapy, psychologists, and speech therapy for children and adults.

Many community members also identify the need for mental health support for workers, families and community members through the transition:

“ Support to help children understand the changes and relieve their fears. Support families' mental health so they stay strong. Reassure elderly with regular information updates. (Survey 76, female, aged 54, unemployed)

Mental health support and guidance. This needs to happen prior to the power station closing down. These mental health support and guidance needs to be offered immediately as I have noticed anxiety already in Collie since the State Government announcement. (Survey 1, female, aged 49, working part-time)

Adequate access to professional counselling and job retraining opportunities. (Survey 94, female, aged 71, retired)

Address the issues in schools as part of resilience support and invite families to come together as groups to support each other and share information. (Survey 133, female, aged 54, unemployed)

More support for our volunteer first responders. (Survey 36, female, aged 80, volunteer)

”

We are aware that the WA Government is planning to launch a mental health program in Collie for affected workers and the broader community. Community members emphasise the importance of this program responding to the diversity of mental health needs and supports as outlined in this report, and being accessible and safe for people of all lived experiences.

Importantly, provision of this support isn't just the responsibility of government, it is also the responsibility of industry:

“ Power station workers are being looked after. Miners need people from the top floor to come down and talk to them about the future of the company and let them know what direction it's taking when the closure is on them.

Ask how they are feeling, ask if their families need help, give them pamphlets for their wives outlining the support services being offered so the information comes home. (Survey 69, female, aged 42, working part-time)

”

STRATEGY 7: A JUST TRANSITION MUST REDUCE EMISSIONS, SUPPORT JUST ADAPTATION, AND ENHANCE RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.

Many community members identify the transition as an opportunity to respond to climate change and "create new lifestyle" (Survey 34, female, aged 33, working part-time) in Collie. Community members recognise the need for the community to prepare for more frequent and intense disasters.

Community members share various suggestions to reduce for lowering emissions in Collie through technologies, practices, action, and strong government policy and legislation:

- **Healing Country**
- **Reduce carbon emissions**
- **Increased investment in renewable energy, including solar power and big battery development**
- **Investment in public transport**
- **Promote bicycle usage**
- **Enhance energy efficiency**
- **Promote reuse and repurposing**
- **Advocate governments to impose fuel emissions standards**
- **Strengthen building codes to encourage climate resilient housing development, for example with passive solar design, insulation and double glazed windows**
- **Reduce waste and avoid littering**

Climate resilience in a just transition also requires coordinated disaster prevention, preparation, and response.

Community members suggest a range of actions to enhance disaster resilience, such as enhancing local fire, flood and emergency services and employing more emergency workers and local first responders; practical fire prevention and management in national parks and towns; and, funding to support the construction of higher energy standards and fire safety in housing.

9. CONCLUSION

This report has shared the experiences and perspectives of more than 200 Collie community members about economic, social, cultural, and environmental changes due to the transition from coal-fired energy production and climate change.

With the reduction in coal-fired power and coal mining in Collie, many community members feel uncertain about the future of work and their community.

These concerns are exacerbated by existing pressures related to rising cost of living, unaffordability of housing, limited access to health and wellbeing services, and the current and future impacts of climate change on Boodja, Kep, Bilya and community.

While these changes affect everyone, some community groups are more at risk than others. These groups include workers and their families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, children and young people, people on low income, women, trans and non-binary peoples, LGBTQIA+ peoples, and people with disability.

Community members call for the Collie transition to leave no one behind, with actions and investment that addresses existing injustices in access and inclusion across the Collie community. The transition must facilitate employment opportunities for people across the whole community, and prepare the community for the diverse impacts of climate change.

Collie's transition from coal-fired energy production provides a significant opportunity to embrace a just and inclusive approach to social and economic change.

Collie has a strong community spirit and a long history of people supporting each other.

The findings in this report can support the process of planning and implementing Collie's transition to build on these community strengths.

This report highlights the importance of including the voices and needs of people in all their lived experiences, particularly people who are frequently marginalised in the community, to support the transition to help build a stronger, cleaner, and fairer community.

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